

THE OLD TIMES

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

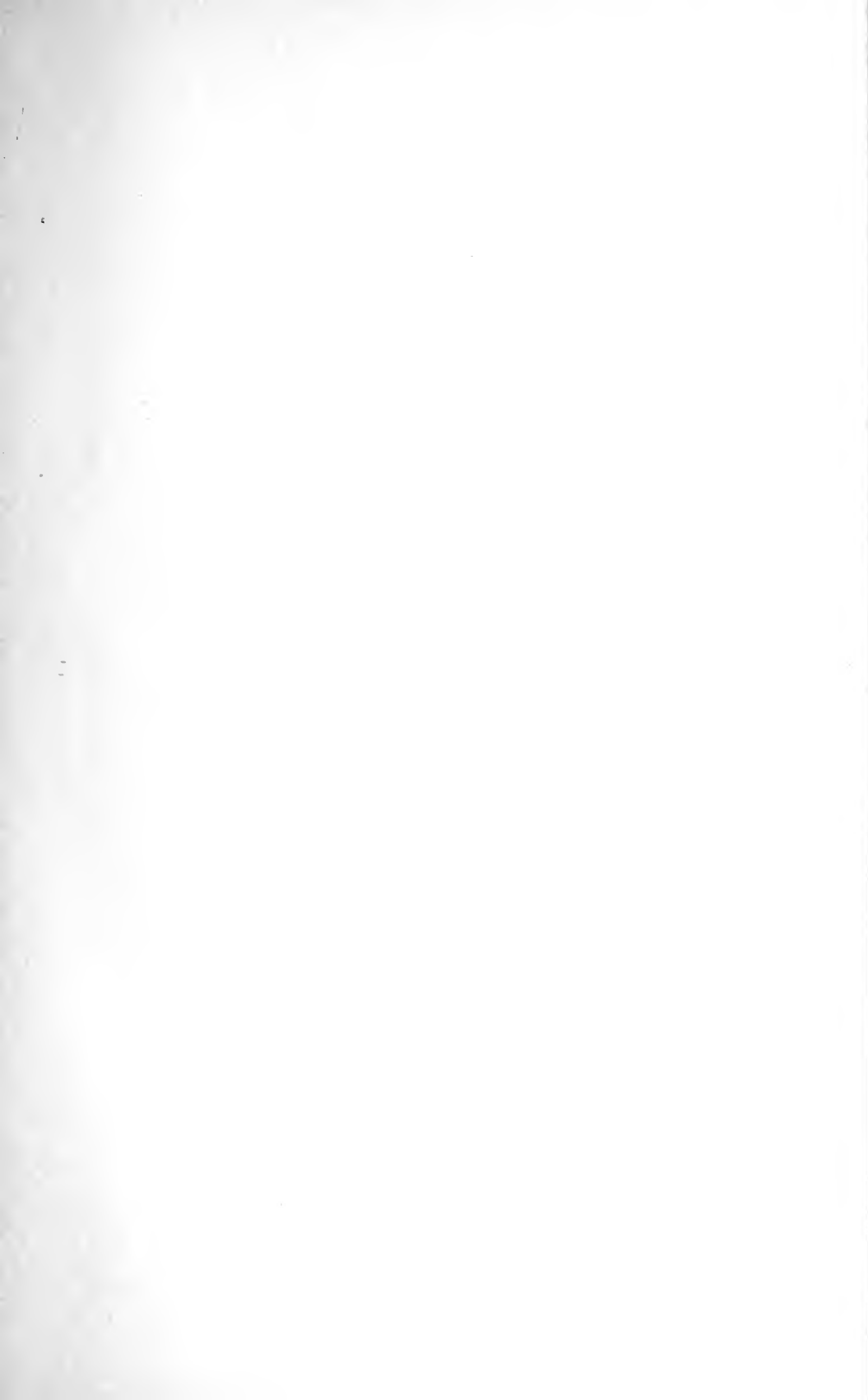


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THE OLD TIMES

BOOKS BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Biographical Edition of the Complete Works of James
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by Edmund H. Eitel, with Bio-
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THE OLD TIMES

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



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TO
BOOTH TARKINGTON

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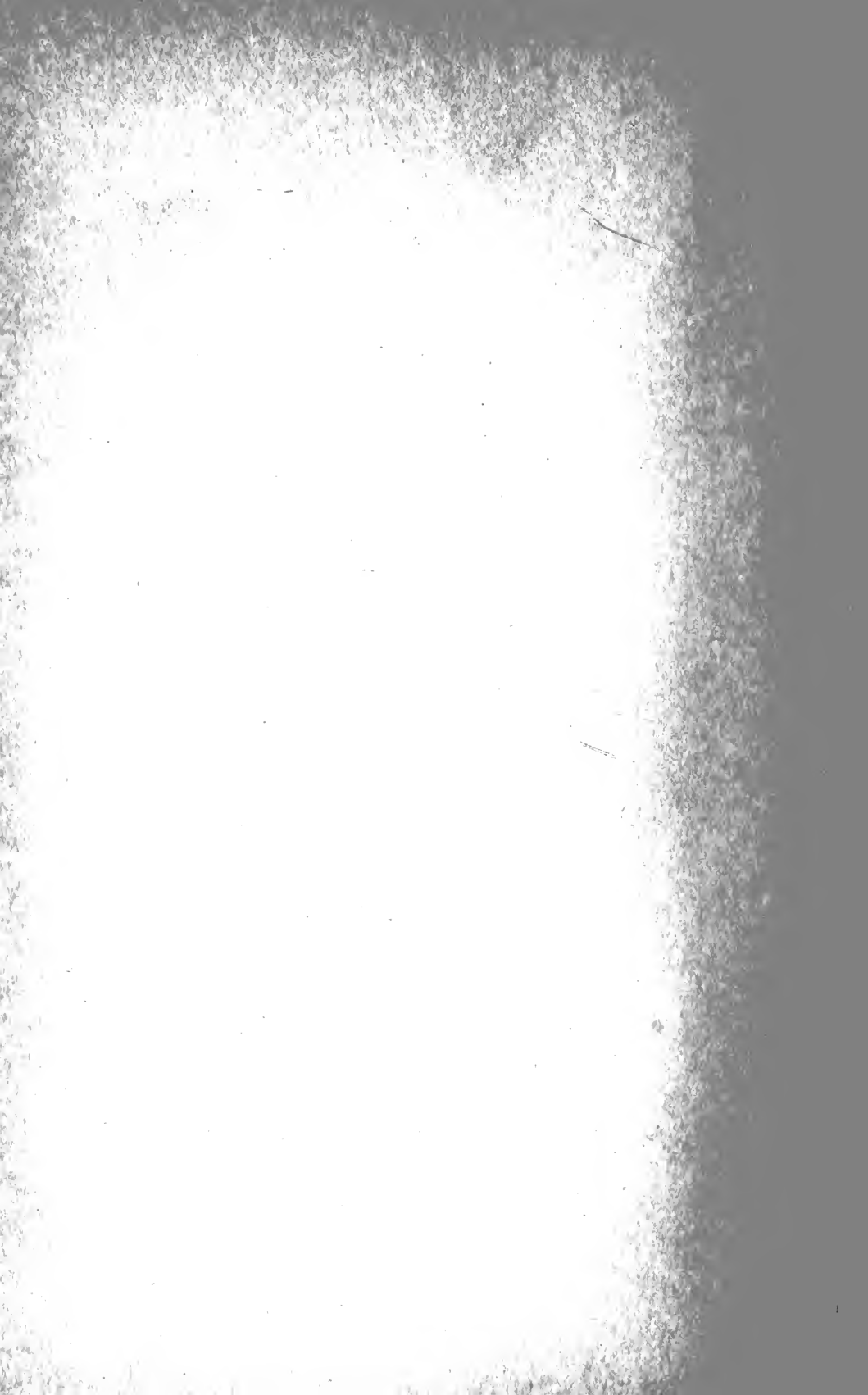
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THE OLD TIMES



THE OLD TIMES WERE THE BEST

FRIENDS, my heart is half aweary
Of its happiness to-night:
Though your songs are gay and cheery,
And your spirits feather-light,
There's a ghostly music haunting
Still the heart of every guest,
And a voiceless chorus chanting
That the Old Times were the best!

CHORUS

All about is bright and pleasant
With the sound of song and jest,
Yet the feeling's ever present
That the Old Times were the best.

There's a music-written story—
There's an opera divine,
In the melody of glory
That renews this soul of mine.

THE OLD TIMES WERE THE BEST

There are looks of love and laughter,
And a thousand joys unguessed
That are saved for the Hereafter,
For the Old Times were the best.

A BACKWARD LOOK

As I sat smoking, alone, yesterday,
And lazily leaning back in my chair,
Enjoying myself in a general way—
Allowing my thoughts a holiday
From weariness, toil and care,—
My fancies—doubtless, for ventilation—
Left ajar the gates of my mind,—
And Memory, seeing the situation,
Slipped out in the street of “Auld Lang Syne.”—

Wandering ever with tireless feet
Through scenes of silence, and jubilee
Of long-hushed voices; and faces sweet
Were thronging the shadowy side of the street
As far as the eye could see;
Dreaming again, in anticipation,
The same old dreams of our boyhood's days
That never come true, from the vague sensation
Of walking asleep in the world's strange ways.

A BACKWARD LOOK

Away to the house where I was born !

And there was the selfsame clock that ticked
From the close of dusk to the burst of morn,
When life-warm hands plucked the golden corn

And helped when the apples were picked.
And the "chany dog" on the mantel-shelf,
With the gilded collar and yellow eyes,
Looked just as at first, when I hugged myself
Sound asleep with the dear surprise.

And down to the swing in the locust-tree,

Where the grass was worn from the trampled ground,
And where "Eck" Skinner, "Old" Carr, and three
Or four such other boys used to be

"Doin' sky-scrapers," or "whirlin' round":
And again Bob climbed for the bluebird's nest,
And again "had shows" in the buggy-shed
Of Guymon's barn, where still, unguessed,
The old ghosts romp through the best days dead !

And again I gazed from the old schoolroom

With a wistful look, of a long June day,
When on my cheek was the hectic bloom
Caught of Mischief, as I presume—
He had such a "partial" way,

A BACKWARD LOOK

It seemed, toward me.—And again I thought
Of a probable likelihood to be
Kept in after school—for a girl was caught
Catching a note from me.

And down through the woods to the swimming-hole—
Where the big, white, hollow old sycamore grows,—
And we never cared when the water was cold,
And always “ducked” the boy that told
On the fellow that tied the clothes.—
When life went so like a dreamy rhyme,
That it seems to me now that then
The world was having a jollier time
Than it ever will have again.

PHILIPER FLASH

YOUNG Philiper Flash was a promising lad,
His intentions were good—but oh, how sad

For a person to think

How the veriest pink

And bloom of perfection may turn out bad.

Old Flash himself was a moral man,

And prided himself on a moral plan,

Of a maxim as old

As the calf of gold,

Of making that boy do what he was told.

And such a good mother had Philiper Flash;

Her voice was as soft as the creamy plash

Of the milky wave

With its musical lave

That gushed through the holes of her patent churn-
dash;—

And the excellent woman loved Philiper so,

She could cry sometimes when he stumped his toe,—

PHILIPER FLASH

And she stroked his hair
With such motherly care
When the dear little angel learned to swear.

Old Flash himself would sometimes say
That his wife had "such a ridiculous way,—
She'd humor that child
Till he'd soon be sp'iled,
And then there'd be the devil to pay!"
And the excellent wife, with a martyr's look,
Would tell old Flash himself "he took
No notice at all
Of the bright-eyed doll
Unless when he spanked him for getting a fall!"

Young Philiper Flash, as time passed by,
Grew into "a boy with a roguish eye":
He could smoke a cigar,
And seemed by far
The most promising youth.—"He's powerful sly,"
Old Flash himself once told a friend,
"Every copper he gets he's sure to spend—
And," said he, "don't you know
If he keeps on so
What a crop of wild oats the boy will grow!"

PHILIPER FLASH

But his dear good mother knew Philiper's ways
So—well, she managed the money to raise;
And old Flash himself
Was "laid on the shelf"
(In the manner of speaking we have nowadays).
For "gracious knows, her darling child,
If he went without money he'd soon grow wild."
So Philiper Flash
With a regular dash
"Swung on to the reins," and went "slingin' the cash."

As old Flash himself, in his office one day,
Was shaving notes in a barberous way,
At the hour of four
Death entered the door
And shaved the note on his life, they say.
And he had for his grave a magnificent tomb,
Though the venturous finger that pointed "Gone
Home,"
Looked white and cold
From being so bold,
As it feared that a popular lie was told.

Young Philiper Flash was a man of style
When he first began unpacking the pile

PHILIPER FLASH

Of the dollars and dimes
Whose jingling chimes
Had chinked to the tune of his father's smile;
And he strewed his wealth with such lavish hand,
His rakish ways were the talk of the land,
And gossipers wise
Sat winking their eyes
(A certain foreboding of fresh surprise).

A "fast young man" was Philiper Flash,
And wore "loud clothes" and a weak mustache,
And "done the Park,"
For an "afternoon lark,"
With a very fast horse of "remarkable dash."
And Philiper handled a billiard-cue
About as well as the best he knew,
And used to say
"He could make it pay
By playing two or three games a day."

And Philiper Flash was his mother's joy,
He seemed to her the magic alloy
That made her glad,
When her heart was sad,

PHILIPER FLASH

With the thought that "she lived for her darling
boy."

His dear good mother wasn't aware
How her darling boy relished a "tare."—

She said "one night

He gave her a fright

By coming home late and *acting* tight."

Young Philiper Flash, on a winterish day,
Was published a bankrupt, so they say—

And as far as I know

I suppose it was so,

For matters went on in a singular way ;

His excellent mother, I think I was told,

Died from exposure and want and cold ;

And Philiper Flash,

With a horrible slash,

Whacked his jugular open and went to smash.

THE SAME OLD STORY

THE same old story told again—
The maiden droops her head,
The ripening glow of her crimson cheek
Is answering in her stead.
The pleading tone of a trembling voice
Is telling her the way
He loved her when his heart was young
In Youth's sunshiny day:
The trembling tongue, the longing tone,
Imploringly ask why
They can not be as happy now
As in the days gone by.
And two more hearts, tumultuous
With overflowing joy,
Are dancing to the music
Which that dear, provoking boy
Is twanging on his bowstring,
As, fluttering his wings,

THE SAME OLD STORY

He sends his love-charged arrows
While merrily he sings:
“Ho! ho! my dainty maiden,
It surely can not be
You are thinking you are master
Of your heart, when it is me.”
And another gleaming arrow
Does the little god’s behest,
And the dainty little maiden
Falls upon her lover’s breast.
“The same old story told again,”
And listened o’er and o’er,
Will still be new, and pleasing, too,
Till “Time shall be no more.”

TO A BOY WHISTLING

THE smiling face of a happy boy
With its enchanted key
Is now unlocking in memory
My store of heartiest joy.

And my lost life again to-day,
In pleasant colors all aglow,
From rainbow tints, to pure white snow,
Is a panorama sliding away.

The whistled air of a simple tune
Eddies and whirls my thoughts around,
As fairy balloons of thistle-down
Sail through the air of June.

O happy boy with untaught grace!
What is there in the world to give
That can buy one hour of the life you live
Or the trivial cause of your smiling face!

WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

THERE wasn't two purtier farms in the state
Than the couple of which I'm about to relate;—
Jinin' each other—belongin' to Brown,
And jest at the edge of a flourishin' town.
Brown was a man, as I understand,
That allus had handled a good 'eal o' land,
And was sharp as a tack in drivin' a trade—
For that's the way most of his money was made.
And all the grounds and the orchards about
His two pet farms was all tricked out
With poppies and posies
And sweet-smellin' rosies;
And hundreds o' kinds
Of all sorts o' vines,
To tickle the most horticultural minds;
'And little dwarf trees not as thick as your wrist
With ripe apples on 'em as big as your fist:
And peaches,—Siberian crabs and pears,
And quinces—Well! *any* fruit *any* tree bears;

WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

And the purtiest stream—jest a-swimmin' with fish,
And—*jest a'most everything heart could wish!*
The purtiest orch'rds—I wish you could see
How purty they was, fer I know it 'ud be
A regular treat!—but I'll go ahead with
My story! A man by the name o' Smith—
(A bad name to rhyme
But I reckon that I'm
Not goin' back on a Smith! nary time!)
'At hadn't a soul of kin nor kith,
And more money than he knowed what to do with,—
So he comes a-ridin' along one day,
And *he* says to Brown, in his offhand way—
Who was trainin' some newfangled vines round a bay-
Winder—"Howdy-do—look-a-here—say:
What'll you take fer this property here?—
I'm talkin' o' leavin' the city this year,
And I want to be
Where the air is free,
And I'll *buy* this place, if it ain't too dear!"—
Well—they grumbled and jawed aroun'—
"I don't like to part with the place," says Brown;
"Well," says Smith, a-jerkin' his head,
"That house yonder—bricks painted red—

WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

Jest like this'n—a *purtier view*—
Who is it owns *it*?" "That's mine too,"
Says Brown, as he winked at a hole in his shoe,
"But I'll tell you right here jest what I *kin* do:—
If you'll pay the figgers I'll sell *it* to you."
Smith went over and looked at the place—
Badgered with Brown, and argied the case—
Thought that Brown's figgers was rather too tall,
But, findin' that Brown wasn't goin' to fall,
In final agreed,
So they drawed up the deed
Fer the farm and the fixtures—the live stock an' all.
And so Smith moved from the city as soon
As he possibly could—But "the man in the moon"
Knowed more'n Smith o' farmin' pursuits,
And jest to convince you, and have no disputes,
How little he knowed,
I'll tell you his "mode,"
As he called it, o' raisin' "the best that growed,"
In the way o' potatoes—
Cucumbers—tomatoes,
And squashes as lengthy as young alligators.
'Twas allus a curious thing to me
How big a fool a feller kin be

WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

When he gits on a farm after leavin' a town!—
Expectin' to raise himself up to renown,
And reap fer himself agricultural fame,
By growin' of squashes—*without any shame*—
As useless and long as a technical name.
To make the soil pure,
And certainly sure,
He plastered the ground with patent manure.
He had cultivators, and double-hoss plows,
And patent machines fer milkin' his cows;
And patent hay-forks—patent measures and weights,
And new patent back-action hinges fer gates,
And barn locks and latches, and such little dribs,
And patents to keep the rats out o' the cribs—
Reapers and mowers,
And patent grain sowers;
And drillers
And tillers
And cucumber hillers,
And horries;—and had patent rollers and scrapers
And took about ten agricultural papers.
So you can imagine how matters turned out:
But *Brown* didn't have not a shadder o' doubt
That Smith didn't know what he was about

WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

When he said that "the *old* way to farm was played out."
But Smith worked ahead,
And when any one said
That the *old* way o' workin' was better instead
O' his "modern idees," he allus turned red,
And wanted to know
What made people so
Infernally anxious to hear theirselves crow?
And guessed that he'd manage to hoe his own row.
Brown he come onc't and leant over the fence,
And told Smith that he couldn't see any sense
In goin' to such a tremendous expense
Fer the sake o' such no-account expeeriments:—
"That'll never make corn!
As shore's you're born
It'll come out the leetlest end of the horn!"
Says Brown, as he pulled off a big roastin'-ear
From a stalk of his own
That had tribble outgrown
Smith's poor yaller shoots, and says he, "Looky here!
This corn was raised in the old-fashioned way,
And I rather imagine that *this* corn'll pay
Expenses fer *raisin'* it!—What do you say?"
Brown got him then to look over his crop.—

WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

His luck that season had been tip-top!
And you may surmise
Smith opened his eyes
And let out a look o' the wildest surprise
When Brown showed him punkins as big as the lies
He was stuffin' him with—about offers he's had
Fer his farm: "I don't want to sell very bad,"
He says, but says he,
"Mr. Smith, you kin see
Fer yourself how matters is standin' with me,
I understand farmin' and I'd better stay,
You know, on my farm;—I'm a-makin' it pay—
I oughtn't to grumble!—I reckon I'll clear
Away over four thousand dollars this year."
And that was the reason, he made it appear,
Why he didn't care about sellin' his farm,
And hinted at his havin' done himself harm
In sellin' the other, and wanted to know
If Smith wouldn't sell back ag'in to him.—So
Smith took the bait, and says he, "Mr. Brown,
I wouldn't *sell* out but we might swop aroun'—
How'll you trade your place fer mine?"
(Purty sharp way o' comin' the shine
Over Smith! Wasn't it?) Well, sir, this Brown

WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

Played out his hand and brought Smithy down—
Traded with him an', workin' it cute,
Raked in two thousand dollars to boot
As slick as a whistle, an' that wasn't all,—
He managed to trade back ag'in the next fall,—
And the next—and the next—as long as Smith stayed
He reaped with his harvests an annual trade.—
Why, I reckon that Brown must 'a' easily made—
On an *average*—nearly two thousand a year—
Together he made over seven thousand—clear.—
Till Mr. Smith found he was losin' his health
In as big a proportion, almost, as his wealth;
So at last he concluded to move back to town,
And sold back his farm to this same Mr. Brown
At very low figgers, by gittin' it down.
Further'n this I have nothin' to say
Than merely advisin' the Smiths fer to stay
In their grocery stores in flourishin' towns
And leave agriculture alone—and the Browns.

A POET'S WOOING

*"I woo'd a woman once,
But she was sharper than an eastern wind."*

—TENNYSON.

"WHAT may I do to make you glad,
To make you glad and free,
Till your light smiles glance
And your bright eyes dance
Like sunbeams on the sea?
Read some rhyme that is blithe and gay
Of a bright May morn and a marriage day?"
And she sighed in a listless way she had,—
"Do not read—it will make me sad!"

"What shall I do to make you glad—
To make you glad and gay,
Till your eyes gleam bright
As the stars at night
When as light as the light of day?—

A POET'S WOOING

Sing some song as I twang the strings
Of my sweet guitar through its wanderings?"

And she sighed in the weary way she had,—
"Do not sing—it will make me sad!"

"What can I do to make you glad—
As glad as glad can be,
Till your clear eyes seem
Like the rays that gleam
And glint through a dew-decked tree?—
Will it please you, dear, that I now begin
A grand old air on my violin?"

And she spoke again in the following way,—
"Yes, oh yes, it would please me, sir;
I would be so glad you'd play
Some grand old march—in character,—
And then as you march away
I will no longer thus be sad,
But oh, so glad—so glad—so glad!"

MAN'S DEVOTION

A LOVER said, "O Maiden, love me well,
For I must go away:
And should *another* ever come to tell
Of love—What *will* you say?"

And she let fall a royal robe of hair
That folded on his arm
And made a golden pillow for her there;
Her face—as bright a charm

As ever setting held in kingly crown—
Made answer with a look,
And reading it, the lover bended down,
And, trusting, "kissed the book."

He took a fond farewell and went away.
And slow the time went by—
So weary—dreary was it, day by day
To love, and wait, and sigh.

MAN'S DEVOTION

She kissed his pictured face sometimes, and said:

“O Lips, so cold and dumb,
I would that you would tell me, if not dead,
Why, why do you not come?”

The picture, smiling, stared her in the face
Unmoved—e'en with the touch
Of tear-drops—*hers*—bejewelling the case—
'Twas plain—she loved him much.

And, thus she grew to think of him as gay
And joyous all the while,
And *she* was sorrowing—“Ah, welladay!”
But pictures *always* smile!

And years—dull years—in dull monotony
As ever went and came,
Still weaving changes on unceasingly,
And changing, changed her name.

Was she untrue?—She oftentimes was glad
And happy as a wife;
But *one* remembrance oftentimes made sad
Her matrimonial life.—

MAN'S DEVOTION

Though its few years were hardly noted, when
Again her path was strown
With thorns—the roses swept away again,
And she again alone!

And then—alas! ah *then!*—her lover came:
“I come to claim you now—
My Darling, for I know *you* are the same,
And I have kept *my* vow

Through these long, long, long years, and now no
more
Shall we asundered be!”
She staggered back and, sinking to the floor,
Cried in her agony:

“I have been false!” she moaned, “*I* am not true—
I am not worthy now,
Nor ever can I be a wife to *you*—
For I have broke my vow!”

And as she kneeled there, sobbing at his feet,
He calmly spoke—no sign
Betrayed his inward agony—“I count you meet
To be a wife of mine!”

MAN'S DEVOTION

And raised her up forgiven, though untrue;
As fond he gazed on her,
She sighed,—“*So happy!*” And she never knew
He was a widower.

A SUMMER AFTERNOON

A LANGUID atmosphere, a lazy breeze,
With labored respiration, moves the wheat
From distant reaches, till the golden seas
Break in crisp whispers at my feet.

My book, neglected of an idle mind,
Hides for a moment from the eyes of men;
Or, lightly opened by a critic wind,
Affrightedly reviews itself again.

Off through the haze that dances in the shine
The warm sun showers in the open glade,
The forest lies, a silhouette design
Dimmed through and through with shade.

A dreamy day; and tranquilly I lie
At anchor from all storms of mental strain;
With absent vision, gazing at the sky,
"Like one that hears it rain."

A SUMMER AFTERNOON

The Katydid, so boisterous last night,
Clinging, inverted, in uneasy poise,
Beneath a wheat-blade, has forgotten quite
If "*Katy did or didn't*" make a noise.

The twitter, sometimes, of a wayward bird
That checks the song abruptly at the sound,
And mildly, chiding echoes that have stirred,
Sink into silence, all the more profound.

'And drowsily I hear the plaintive strain
Of some poor dove . . . Why, I can
scarcely keep
My heavy eyelids—there it is again—
"Coo-coo!"—I mustn't—"Coo-coo!"—fall
asleep!

AT LAST

A DARK, tempestuous night; the stars shut in
With shrouds of fog; an inky, jet-black blot
The firmament; and where the moon has been
An hour ago seems like the darkest spot.
The weird wind—furious at its demon game—
Rattles one's fancy like a window-frame.

A care-worn face peers out into the dark,
And childish faces—frightened at the gloom—
Grow awed and vacant as they turn to mark
The father's as he passes through the room:
The gate-latch clatters, and wee baby Bess
Whispers, "The doctor's tummin' now, I dess!"

The father turns; a sharp, swift flash of pain
Flits o'er his face: "Amanda, child! I said
A moment since—I see I must *again*—
Go take your little sisters off to bed!
There, Effie, Rose, and *Clara mustn't cry!*"
"I tan't he'p it—I'm fyaid 'at mama'll die!"

AT LAST

What are his feelings, when this man alone
Sits in the silence, glaring in the grate
That sobs and sighs on in an undertone
As stoical—immovable as Fate,
While muffled voices from the sick one's room
Come in like heralds of a dreaded doom?

The door-latch jingles: in the doorway stands
The doctor, while the draft puffs in a breath—
The dead coals leap to life, and clap their hands,
The flames flash up. A face as pale as death
Turns slowly—teeth tight-clenched, and with a look
The doctor, through his specs, reads like a book.

“Come, brace up, Major!”—“Let me know the worst!”

“W’y, you’re the biggest fool I ever saw—
Here, Major—take a little brandy first—

There! She’s a *boy*—I mean *he* is—hurrah!”
“Wake up the other girls—and shout for joy—
Eureka is his name—I’ve found A BOY!”

MY JOLLY FRIEND'S SECRET

AN, friend of mine, how goes it

Since you've taken you a mate?—

Your smile, though, plainly shows it

Is a very happy state!

Dan Cupid's necromancy!

You must sit you down and dine,

And lubricate your fancy

With a glass or two of wine.

And as you have "deserted,"

As my other chums have done,

While I laugh alone diverted,

As you drop off one by one—

And I've remained unwedded,

Till—you see—look here—that I'm,

In a manner, "snatched bald-headed"

By the sportive hand of Time!

I'm an "old 'un!" yes, but wrinkles

Are not so plenty, quite,

As to cover up the twinkles

Of the *boy*—ain't I right?

MY JOLLY FRIEND'S SECRET

Yet, there are ghosts of kisses
Under this mustache of mine
My mem'ry only misses
When I drown 'em out with wine.

From acknowledgment so ample,
You would hardly take me for
What I am—a perfect sample
Of a “jolly bachelor”;
Not a bachelor has being
When he laughs at married life
But his heart and soul's agreeing
That he ought to have a wife!

Ah, ha! old chum, this claret,
Like Fatima, holds the key
Of the old Blue-Beardish garret
Of my hidden mystery!
Did you say you'd like to listen?
Ah, my boy! the “*Sad No More!*”
And the tear-drops that will glisten—
Turn the catch upon the door,

And sit you down beside me,
And put yourself at ease—
I'll trouble you to slide me
That wine decanter, please;

MY JOLLY FRIEND'S SECRET

The path is kind o' mazy
Where my fancies have to go,
And my heart gets sort o' lazy
On the journey—don't you know?

Let me see—when I was twenty—
It's a lordly age, my boy,
When a fellow's money's plenty,
And the leisure to enjoy—
And a girl—with hair as golden
As—*that*; and lips—well—quite
As red as *this* I'm holdin'
Between you and the light.

And eyes and a complexion—
Ah, heavens!—le'-me-see—
Well,—just in this connection,—
Did you lock that door for me?
Did I start in recitation
My past life to recall?
Well, *that's* an indication
I am purty tight—that's all!

JOB WORK

“WRITE me a rhyme of the present time”:

And the poet took his pen
And wrote such lines as the miser minds
Hide in the hearts of men.

He grew enthused, as the poets used
When their fingers kissed the strings
Of some sweet lyre, and caught the fire
True inspiration brings,

And sang the song of a nation's wrong—
Of the patriot's galling chain,
And the glad release that the angel, Peace,
Has given him again.

He sang the lay of religion's sway,
Where a hundred creeds clasp hands
And shout in glee such a symphony
That the whole world understands.

JOB WORK

He struck the key of monopoly,
And sang of her swift decay,
And travelled the track of the railway back
With a blithesome roundelay—

Of the tranquil bliss of a true love kiss;
And painted the picture, too,
Of the wedded life, and the patient wife,
And the husband fond and true;

And sang the joy that a noble boy
Brings to a father's soul,
Who lets the wine as a mocker shine
Stagnated in the bowl.

And he stabbed his pen in the ink again,
And wrote, with a writhing frown,
"This is the end." "And now, my friend,
You may print it—upside down!"

PRIVATE THEATRICALS

A QUITE convincing axiom
Is, "Life is like a play";
For, turning back its pages some
Few dog-eared years away,
I find where I
Committed my
Love tale—with brackets where to sigh.

I feel an idle interest
To read again the page;
I enter, as a lover dressed,
At twenty years of age,
And play the part
With throbbing heart,
And all an actor's glowing art.

And she who plays my Lady-love
Excels!—Her loving glance

PRIVATE THEATRICALS

Has power her audience to move—

I am her audience.—

Her acting tact,

To tell the fact,

“Brings down the house” in every act.

And often we defy the curse

Of storms and thunder-showers,

To meet together and rehearse

This little play of ours—

I think, when she

“Makes love” to me,

She kisses very naturally!

.

Yes; it's convincing—rather—

That “Life is like a play”:

I am playing “Heavy Father”

In a “Screaming Farce” to-day,

That so “brings down

The house” I frown,

And fain would “ring the curtain down.”

PLAIN SERMONS

I SAW a man—and envied him beside—

Because of this world's goods he had great store ;
But even as I envied him, he died,
And left me envious of him no more.

I saw another man—and envied still—

Because he was content with frugal lot ;
But as I envied him, the rich man's will
Bequeathed him all, and envy I forgot.

Yet still another man I saw, and he

I envied for a calm and tranquil mind
That nothing fretted in the least degree—
Until, alas ! I found that he was blind.

What vanity is envy ! for I find

I have been rich in dross of thought, and poor
In that I was a fool, and lastly blind—
For never having seen myself before !

“JOHNSON’S BOY”

THE world is turned ag’in’ me,
And people says, “They guess
That nothin’ else is in me
But pure maliciousness !”
I git the blame for doin’
What other chaps destroy,
And I’m a-goin’ to ruin
Because I’m “Johnson’s boy.”

That ain’t my name—I’d rather
They’d call me *Ike* or *Pat*—
But they’ve forgot the other—
And so have *I*, for that !
I reckon it’s as handy,
When Nibsy breaks his toy,
Or some one steals his candy,
To say ’twas “*Johnson’s boy* !”

“JOHNSON’S BOY”

You can’t git any water
At the pump, and find the spout
So durn chuck-full o’ mortar
That you have to bore it out;
You tackle any scholar
In Wisdom’s wise employ,
And I’ll bet you half a dollar
He’ll say it’s “Johnson’s boy!”

Folks don’t know how I suffer
In my uncomplainin’ way—
They think I’m gittin’ tougher
And tougher every day.
Last Sunday night, when Flinder
Was a-shoutin’ out for joy,
And some one shook the winder,
He prayed for “Johnson’s boy.”

I’m tired of bein’ follered
By farmers every day,
And then o’ bein’ collared
For coaxin’ hounds away;
Hounds always plays me double—
It’s a trick they all enjoy—
To git me into trouble,
Because I’m “Johnson’s boy.”

“JOHNSON’S BOY”

But if I git to Heaven,
I hope the Lord’ll see
Some boy has been perfect,
And lay it on to me;
I’ll swell the song sonorous,
And clap my wings for joy,
And sail off on the chorus—
“Hurrah for ‘Johnson’s boy’!”

SCRAPS

THERE'S a habit I have nurtured,
From the sentimental time
When my life was like a story,
And my heart a happy rhyme,—
Of clipping from the paper,
Or magazine, perhaps,
The idle songs of dreamers,
Which I treasure as my scraps.

They hide among my letters,
And they find a cosy nest
In the bosom of my wrapper,
And the pockets of my vest;
They clamber in my fingers
Till my dreams of wealth relapse
In fairer dreams than Fortune's
Though I find them only scraps.

Sometimes I find, in tatters
Like a beggar, form as fair

SCRAPS

As ever gave to Heaven
The treasure of a prayer;
And words all dim and faded,
And obliterate in part,
Grow into fadeless meanings
That are printed on the heart.

Sometimes a childish jingle
Flings an echo, sweet and clear,
And thrills me as I listen
To the laughs I used to hear;
And I catch the gleam of faces,
And the glimmer of glad eyes
That peep at me expectant
O'er the walls of Paradise.

O syllables of measure!
Though you wheel yourselves in line,
And await the further order
Of this eager voice of mine;
You are powerless to follow
O'er the field my fancy maps,
So I lead you back to silence
Feeling you are only scraps.

DEAD IN SIGHT OF FAME

DIED—*Early morning of September 5, 1876, and in the gleaming dawn of "name and fame," Hamilton J. Dunbar.*

DEAD! Dead! Dead!

We thought him ours alone;
And were so proud to see him tread
The rounds of fame, and lift his head
Where sunlight ever shone;
But now our aching eyes are dim,
And look through tears in vain for him.

Name! Name! Name!

It was his diadem;
Nor ever tarnish-taint of shame
Could dim its lustre—like a flame
Reflected in a gem,
He wears it blazing on his brow
Within the courts of Heaven now.

DEAD IN SIGHT OF FAME

Tears! Tears! Tears!

Like dew upon the leaf
That bursts at last—from out the years
The blossom of a trust appears

That blooms above the grief;
And mother, brother, wife, and child
Will see it and be reconciled.

DEAD LEAVES

As THOUGH a gypsy maiden with dim look,
Sat crooning by the roadside of the year,
So, Autumn, in thy strangeness, thou art here
To read dark fortunes for us from the book
Of fate; thou flingest in the crinkled brook
The trembling maple's gold, and frosty-clear
Thy mocking laughter thrills the atmosphere,
And drifting on its current calls the rook
To other lands. As one who wades, alone,
Deep in the dusk, and hears the minor talk
Of distant melody, and finds the tone,
In some weird way compelling him to stalk
The paths of childhood over,—so I moan,
And like a troubled sleeper, groping, walk.

NIGHT

FUNEREAL Darkness, drear and desolate,
Muffles the world. The moaning of the wind
Is piteous with sobs of saddest kind;
And laughter is a phantom at the gate
Of memory. The long-neglected grate
Within sprouts into flame and lights the mind
With hopes and wishes long ago refined
To ashes,—long departed friends await
Our words of welcome: and our lips are dumb
And powerless to greet the ones that press
Old kisses there. The baby beats its drum,
And fancy marches to the dear caress
Of mother-arms, and all the gleeful hum
Of home intrudes upon our loneliness.

OVER THE EYES OF GLADNESS

*"The voice of One hath spoken,
And the bended reed is bruised—
The golden bowl is broken,
And the silver cord is loosed."*

OVER the eyes of gladness
The lids of sorrow fall,
And the light of mirth is darkened
Under the funeral pall.

The hearts that throbbed with rapture
In dreams of the future years,
Are wakened from their slumbers,
And their visions drowned in tears.

.

Two buds on the bough in the morning—
Twin buds in the smiling sun,
But the frost of death has fallen
And blighted the bloom of one.

OVER THE EYES OF GLADNESS

One leaf of life still folded
Has fallen from the stem,
Leaving the symbol teaching
There still are two of them,—

For though—through Time's gradations,
The *living* bud may burst,—
The *withered* one is gathered,
And blooms in Heaven first.

ONLY A DREAM

ONLY a dream !

Her head is bent
Over the keys of the instrument,
While her trembling fingers go astray
In the foolish tune she tries to play.
He smiles in his heart, though his deep, sad eyes
Never change to a glad surprise
As he finds the answer he seeks confessed
In glowing features, and heaving breast.

Only a dream !

Though the *fête* is grand,
And a hundred hearts at her command,
She takes no part, for her soul is sick
Of the Coquette's art and the Serpent's trick,—
She somehow feels she would like to fling
Her sins away as a robe, and spring
Up like a lily pure and white,
And bloom alone for *him* to-night.

ONLY A DREAM

Only a dream

That the fancy weaves.

The lids unfold like the rose's leaves,
And the upraised eyes are moist and mild
As the prayerful eyes of a drowsy child.
Does she remember the spell they once
Wrought in the past a few short months?
Haply not—yet her lover's eyes
Never change to the glad surprise.

Only a dream!

He winds her form

Close in the coil of his curving arm,
And whirls her away in a gust of sound
As wild and sweet as the poets found
In the paradise where the silken tent
Of the Persian blooms in the Orient,—
While ever the chords of the music seem
Whispering sadly,—“Only a dream!”

SONG OF THE NEW YEAR

I HEARD the bells at midnight
 Ring in the dawning year ;
And above the clanging chorus
 Of the song, I seemed to hear
A choir of mystic voices
 Flinging echoes, ringing clear,
From a band of angels winging
 Through the haunted atmosphere :
 "Ring out the shame and sorrow,
 And the misery and sin,
That the dawning of the morrow
 May in peace be ushered in."

And I thought of all the trials
 The departed years had cost,
And the blooming hopes and pleasures
 That are withered now and lost ;
And with joy I drank the music

SONG OF THE NEW YEAR

Stealing o'er the feeling there
As the spirit song came pealing
On the silence everywhere :
 "Ring out the shame and sorrow,
 And the misery and sin,
That the dawning of the morrow
 May in peace be ushered in."

And I listened as a lover
 To an utterance that flows
In syllables like dewdrops
 From the red lips of a rose,
Till the anthem, fainter growing,
 Climbing higher, chiming on
Up the rounds of happy rhyming,
 Slowly vanished in the dawn :
 "Ring out the shame and sorrow,
 And the misery and sin,
That the dawning of the morrow
 May in peace be ushered in."

Then I raised my eyes to Heaven,
 And with trembling lips I pled
For a blessing for the living
 And a pardon for the dead ;

SONG OF THE NEW YEAR

And like a ghost of music
 Slowly whispered—lowly sung—
Came the echo pure and holy
 In the happy angel tongue:
 “Ring out the shame and sorrow,
 And the misery and sin,
And the dawn of every morrow
 Will in peace be ushered in.”

A LETTER TO A FRIEND

THE past is like a story
I have listened to in dreams
That vanished in the glory
Of the Morning's early gleams;
And—at my shadow glancing—
I feel a loss of strength,
As the Day of Life advancing
Leaves it shorn of half its length.

But it's all in vain to worry
At the rapid race of Time—
'And he flies in such a flurry
When I trip him with a rhyme,
I'll bother him no longer
Than to thank you for the thought
That "my fame is growing stronger
As you really think it ought."

A LETTER TO A FRIEND

And though I fall below it,
I might know as much of mirth
To live and die a poet
Of unacknowledged worth;
For Fame is but a vagrant—
Though a loyal one and brave,
And his laurels ne'er so fragrant
As when scattered o'er the grave.

LINES FOR AN ALBUM

I WOULD not trace the hackneyed phrase
Of shallow words and empty praise,
And prate of "peace" till one might think
My foolish pen were drunk with ink.
Nor will I here the wish express
Of "lasting love and happiness,"
And "cloudless skies"—for after all
"Into each life some rain must fall."
—No. Keep the empty page below,
In my remembrance, white as snow—
Nor sigh to know the secret prayer
My spirit hand has written there.

TO ANNIE

WHEN the lids of dusk are falling
O'er the dreamy eyes of day,
And the whippoorwills are calling,
And the lesson laid away,—
May Mem'ry soft and tender
As the prelude of the night,
Bend over you and render
As tranquil a delight.

THE HARP OF THE MINSTREL

THE harp of the minstrel has never a tone
As sad as the song in his bosom to-night,
For the magical touch of his fingers alone
Can not waken the echoes that breathe it aright;
But oh! as the smile of the moon may impart
A sorrow to one in an alien clime,
Let the light of the melody fall on the heart,
And cadence his grief into musical rhyme.

The faces have faded, the eyes have grown dim
That once were his passionate love and his pride;
And alas! all the smiles that once blossomed for him
Have fallen away as the flowers have died.
The hands that entwined him the laureate's wreath
And crowned him with fame in the long, long ago,
Like the laurels are withered and folded beneath
The grass and the stubble—the frost and the snow.

THE HARP OF THE MINSTREL

Then sigh, if thou wilt, as the whispering strings
Strive ever in vain for the utterance clear,
And think of the sorrowful spirit that sings,
And jewel the song with the gem of a tear.
For the harp of the minstrel has never a tone
As sad as the song in his bosom to-night,
And the magical touch of his fingers alone
Can not waken the echoes that breathe it aright.

JOHN WALSH

A STRANGE life—strangely passed !
We may not read the soul
When God has folded up the scroll
In death at last.

We may not—dare not say of one
Whose task of life as well was done
As he could do it,—“This is lost,
And prayers may never pay the cost.”

Who listens to the song
That sings within the breast,
Should ever hear the good expressed
Above the wrong.

And he who leans an eager ear
To catch the discord, he will hear
The echoes of his own weak heart
Beat out the most discordant part.

JOHN WALSH

Whose tender heart could build
Affection's bower above
A heart where baby nests of love
Were ever filled,—
With upward growth may reach and twine
About the children, grown divine,
That once were his a time so brief
His very joy was more than grief.

O Sorrow—"Peace, be still!"
God reads the riddle right;
And we who grope in constant night
But serve His will;
And when sometime the doubt is gone,
And darkness blossoms into dawn,—
"God keeps the good," we then will say:
"'Tis but the dross He throws away."

THAT OTHER MAUD MULLER

MAUD MULLER worked at making hay,
And cleared her forty cents a day.

Her clothes were coarse, but her health was fine,
And so she worked in the sweet sunshine

Singing as glad as a bird in May
"Barbara Allen" the livelong day.

She often glanced at the far-off town,
And wondered if eggs were up or down.

And the sweet song died of a strange disease,
Leaving a phantom taste of cheese,

And an appetite and a nameless ache
For soda-water and ginger cake.

The Judge rode slowly into view—
Stopped his horse in the shade and drew

THAT OTHER MAUD MULLER

His fine-cut out, while the blushing Maud
Marvelled much at the kind he "chawed."

"He was dry as a fish," he said with a wink,
"And kind o' thought that a good square drink

Would brace him up." So the cup was filled
With the crystal wine that old spring spilled;

And she gave it him with a sun-browned hand.
"Thanks," said the Judge in accents bland;

"A thousand thanks! for a sweeter draught,
From a fairer hand"—but there he laughed.

And the sweet girl stood in the sun that day,
And raked the Judge instead of the hay.

A MAN OF MANY PARTS

It was a man of many parts,
Who in his coffer mind
Had stored the Classics and the Arts
And Sciences combined ;
The purest gems of poesy
Came flashing from his pen—
The wholesome truths of History
He gave his fellow men.

He knew the stars from “Dog” to Mars ;
And he could tell you, too,
Their distances—as though the cars
Had often checked him through—
And time ’twould take to reach the sun,
Or by the “Milky Way,”
Drop in upon the moon, or run
The homeward trip, or stay.

A MAN OF MANY PARTS

With Logic at his fingers' ends,
Theology in mind,
He often entertained his friends
Until they died resigned;
And with inquiring mind intent
Upon Alchemic arts
A dynamite experiment—
.

A man of many parts!

A DREAM OF LONG AGO

LYING listless in the mosses
Underneath a tree that tosses
Flakes of sunshine, and embosses
 Its green shadow with the snow—
Drowsy-eyed, I sink in slumber
Born of fancies without number—
Tangled fancies that encumber
 Me with dreams of long ago.

Ripples of the river singing;
And the water-lilies swinging
Bells of Parian, and ringing
 Peals of perfume faint and fine,
While old forms and fairy faces
Leap from out their hiding-places
In the past, with glad embraces
 Fraught with kisses sweet as wine.

A DREAM OF LONG AGO

Willows dip their slender fingers
O'er the little fisher's stringers,
While he baits his hook and lingers
 Till the shadows gather dim ;
And afar off comes a calling
Like the sounds of water falling,
With the lazy echoes drawling
 Messages of haste to him.

Little naked feet that tinkle
Through the stubble-fields, and twinkle
Down the winding road, and sprinkle
 Little mists of dusty rain,
While in pasture-lands the cattle
Cease their grazing with a rattle
Of the bells whose clappers tattle
 To their masters down the lane.

Trees that hold their tempting treasures
O'er the orchard's hedge embrasures,
Furnish their forbidden pleasures
 As in Eden lands of old ;
And the coming of the master
Indicates a like disaster
To the frightened heart that faster
 Beats pulsations manifold.

A DREAM OF LONG AGO

Puckered lips whose pipings tingle
In staccato notes that mingle
Musically with the jingle-

 Haunted winds that lightly fan
Mellow twilights, crimson-tinted
By the sun, and picture-printed
Like a book that sweetly hinted
 Of the Nights Arabian.

Porticos with columns plaited
And entwined with vines and freighted
With a bloom all radiated

 With the light of moon and star;
Where some tender voice is winging
In sad flights of song, and singing
To the dancing fingers flinging
 Dripping from the sweet guitar.

Would my dreams were never taken
From me: that with faith unshaken
I might sleep and never waken

 On a weary world of woe!
Links of love would never sever
As I dreamed them, never, never!
I would glide along forever
 Through the dreams of long ago.

WASH LOWRY'S REMINISCENCE

AND you're the poet of this concern?

I've seed your name in print

A dozen times, but I'll be dern

I'd 'a' never 'a' took the hint

O' the size you air—fer I'd pictured you

A kind of a tallish man—

Dark-complected and sallor too,

And on the consumed plan.

'Stid o' that you're little and small,

With a milk-and-water face—

'Thout no snap in your eyes at all,

Er nothin' to suit the case!

Kind o' look like a—I don't know—

One o' these fair-ground chaps

That runs a thingamajig to blow,

Er a candy-stand perhaps.

WASH LOWRY'S REMINISCENCE

'Ll I've allus thought that poetry
Was a sort of a—some disease—
Fer I knowed a poet once, and he
Was techy and hard to please,
And moody-like, and kind o' sad
And didn't seem to mix
With other folks—like his health was bad,
Er his liver out o' fix.

Used to teach fer a livelihood—
There's folks in Pipe Crick yit
Remembers him—and he was good
At cipherin' I'll admit—
And posted up in G'ography
But when it comes to tact,
And gittin' along with the school, you see,
He fizzled, and that's a fact!

Boarded with us fer fourteen months
And in all that time I'll say
We never caught him a-sleepin' once
Er idle a single day.
But shucks! It made him worse and worse
A-writin' rhymes and stuff,
And the school committee used to furse
'At the school warn't good enough.

WASH LOWRY'S REMINISCENCE

He warn't as strict as he ought to been,
And never was known to whip,
Er even to keep a scholard in
At work at his penmanship;
'Stid o' that he'd learn 'em notes,
And have 'em ever' day,
Spilin' hymns and a-splittin' th'oats
With his "Do-sol-fa-me-ra!"

Tell finally it was jest agreed
We'd have to let him go,
And we all felt bad—we did indeed,
When we come to tell him so;
Fer I remember, he turned so white,
And smiled so sad, somehow,
I some way felt it warn't right,
And I'm shore it warn't now!

He hadn't no complaints at all—
He bid the school adieu,
And all o' the scholards great and small
Was mighty sorry too!
And when he closed that afternoon
They sung some lines that he
Had writ a purpose, to some old tune
That suited the case, you see.

WASH LOWRY'S REMINISCENCE

And then he lingered and delayed
And wouldn't go away—
And shet himself in his room and stayed
A-writin' from day to day;
And kep' a-gittin' stranger still,
And thinner all the time,
You know, as any feller will
On nothin' else but rhyme.

He didn't seem adzactly right,
Er like he was crossed in love,
He'd work away night after night,
And walk the floor above;
We'd hear him read and talk, and sing
So lonesome-like and low,
My woman's cried like ever'thing—
'Way in the night, you know.

And when at last he tuck to bed
He'd have his ink and pen;
"So's he could coat the muse," he said,
"He'd die contented then";
And jest before he past away
He read with dyin' gaze
The epitaph that stands to-day
To show you where he lays.

WASH LOWRY'S REMINISCENCE

And ever sence then I've allus thought
That poetry's some disease,
And them like you that's got it ought
To watch their q's and p's;
And leave the sweets of rhyme, to sup
On the wholesome draughts of toil,
And git your health recruited up
By plowin' in rougher soil.

THE ANCIENT PRINTERMAN

“O PRINTERMAN of sallow face,
And look of absent guile,
Is it the ‘copy’ on your ‘case’
That causes you to smile?
Or is it some old treasure scrap
You cull from Memory’s file?

“I fain would guess its mystery—
For often I can trace
A fellow dreamer’s history
Whene’er it haunts the face;
Your fancy’s running riot
In a retrospective race!

“Ah, Printerman, you’re straying
Afar from ‘stick’ and type—
Your heart has ‘gone a-maying,’
And you taste old kisses, ripe
Again on lips that pucker
At your old asthmatic pipe!

THE ANCIENT PRINTERMAN

“You are dreaming of old pleasures
That have faded from your view;
And the music-burdened measures
Of the laughs you listen to
Are now but angel-echoes—
O, have I spoken true?”

The ancient Printer hinted
With a motion full of grace
To where the words were printed
On a card above his “case,”—
“I am deaf and dumb!” I left him
With a smile upon his face.

WHEN MOTHER COMBED MY HAIR

WHEN Memory, with gentle hand,
Has led me to that foreign land
Of childhood days, I long to be
Again the boy on bended knee,
With head a-bow, and drowsy smile
Hid in a mother's lap the while,
With tender touch and kindly care,
She bends above and combs my hair.

Ere threats of Time, or ghosts of cares
Had paled it to the hue it wears,
Its tangled threads of amber light
Fell o'er a forehead, fair and white,
That only knew the light caress
Of loving hands, or sudden press
Of kisses that were sifted there
The times when mother combed my hair.

WHEN MOTHER COMBED MY HAIR

But its last gleams of gold have slipped
Away; and Sorrow's manuscript
Is fashioned of the snowy brow—
So lined and underscored now
That you, to see it, scarce would guess
It e'er had felt the fond caress
Of loving lips, or known the care
Of those dear hands that combed my hair.

.

I am so tired! Let me be
A moment at my mother's knee;
One moment—that I may forget
The trials waiting for me yet:
One moment free from every pain—
O! Mother! Comb my hair again!
And I will, oh, so humbly bow,
For I've a wife that combs it now.

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

FOR the sake of guilty conscience, and the heart that
ticks the time

Of the clockworks of my nature, I desire to say that I'm
A weak and sinful creature, as regards my daily walk
The last five years and better. It ain't worth while to
talk—

I've been too mean to tell it! I've been so hard, you see,
And full of pride, and—onry—now there's the word for
me—

Just onry—and to show you, I'll give my history
With vital points in question, and I think you'll all
agree.

I was always stiff and stubborn since I could recollect,
And had an awful temper, and never would reflect;
And always into trouble—I remember once at school
The teacher tried to flog me, and I reversed that rule.

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

O I was bad, I tell you! And it's a funny move
That a fellow wild as I was could ever fall in love;
And it's a funny notion that an animal like me,
Under a girl's weak fingers was as tame as tame could be!

But it's so, and sets me thinking of the easy way she had
Of cooling down my temper—though I'd be fighting mad.
“My Lion Queen” I called her—when a spell of mine
occurred

She'd come in a den of feelings and quell them with a
word.

I'll tell you how she loved me—and what her people
thought:

When I asked to marry Annie they said “they reckoned
not—

That I cut too many didoes and monkey-shines to suit
Their idea of a son-in-law, and I could go, to boot!”

I tell you that thing riled me! Why, I felt my face turn
white,

And my teeth shut like a steel trap, and the fingers of
my right

Hand pained me with their pressure—all the rest's a
mystery

Till I heard my Annie saying—“I'm going, too, you see.”

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

We were coming through the gateway, and she wavered
for a spell

When she heard her mother crying and her raving father
yell

That she warn't no child of his'n—like an actor in a play
We saw at Independence, coming through the other day.

Well! that's the way we started. And for days and weeks
and months

And even years we journeyed on, regretting never once
Of starting out together upon the path of life—

A kind o' sort o' husband, but a mighty loving wife,—

And the cutest little baby—little Grace—I see her now
A-standin' on the pig-pen as her mother milked the
cow—

And I can hear her shouting—as I stood unloading
straw,—

“I'm ain't as big as papa, but I'm biggerest'n ma.”

Now folks that never married don't seem to understand
That a little baby's language is the sweetest ever
planned—

Why, I tell you it's pure music, and I'll just go on to say
That I sometimes have a notion that the angels talk that
way!

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

There's a chapter in this story I'd be happy to destroy;
I could burn it up before you with a mighty sight of joy;
But I'll go ahead and give it—not in detail, no, my
friend,

For it takes five years of reading before you find the end.

My Annie's folks relented—at least, in some degree;
They sent one time for Annie, but they didn't send for me.
The old man wrote the message with a heart as hot and dry
As a furnace—"Annie Mullen, come and see your mother
die."

I saw the slur intended—why I fancied I could see
The old man shoot the insult like a poison dart at me;
And in that heat of passion I swore an inward oath
That if Annie pleased her father she could never please
us both.

I watched her—dark and sullen—as she hurried on her
shawl;

I watched her—calm and cruel, though I saw her tear-
drops fall;

I watched her—cold and heartless, though I heard her
moaning, call

For mercy from high Heaven—and I smiled throughout
it all.

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

Why even when she kissed me, and her tears were on my
brow,

As she murmured, "George, forgive me—I must go to
mother now!"

Such hate there was within me that I answered not at all,
But calm, and cold and cruel, I smiled throughout it all.

But a shadow in the doorway caught my eye, and then
the face

Full of innocence and sunshine of little baby Grace.

And I snatched her up and kissed her, and I softened
through and through

For a minute when she told me "I must kiss her muvver
too."

I remember, at the starting, how I tried to freeze again
As I watched them slowly driving down the little crooked
lane—

When Annie shouted something that ended in a cry,
And how I tried to whistle and it fizzled in a sigh.

I remember running after, with a glimmer in my sight—
Pretending I'd discovered that the traces wasn't right;
And the last that I remember, as they disappeared from
view,

Was little Grace a-calling, "I see papa! Howdy-do!"

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

And left alone to ponder, I again took up my hate
For the old man who would chuckle that I was desolate;
And I mouthed my wrongs in mutters till my pride
 called up the pain
His last insult had given me—until I smiled again

Till the wild beast in my nature was raging in its den—
With no one now to quell it, and I wrote a letter then
Full of hissing things, and heated with so hot a heat of
 hate
That my pen flashed out black lightning at a most terrific rate.

I wrote that “she had wronged me when she went away
 from me—
Though to see her dying mother ’twas her father’s victory,
And a woman that could waver when her husband’s
 pride was rent
Was no longer worthy of it.” And I shut the house and
 went.

To tell of my long exile would be of little good—
Though I couldn’t half-way tell it, and I wouldn’t if I
 could!

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

I could tell of California—of a wild and vicious life;
Of trackless plains, and mountains, and the Indian's
scalping-knife.

I could tell of gloomy forests howling wild with threats
of death;

I could tell of fiery deserts that have scorched me with
their breath;

I could tell of wretched outcasts by the hundreds, great
and small,

And could claim the nasty honor of the greatest of them
all.

I could tell of toil and hardship; and of sickness and
disease,

And hollow-eyed starvation, but I tell you, friend, that
these

Are trifles in comparison with what a fellow feels

With that bloodhound, Remorsefulness, forever at his
heels.

I remember—worn and weary of the long, long years of
care,

When the frost of time was making early harvest of my
hair—

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

I remember, wrecked and hopeless of a rest beneath the
sky,

My resolve to quit the country, and to seek the East,
and die.

I remember my long journey, like a dull, oppressive
dream,

Across the empty prairies till I caught the distant gleam
Of a city in the beauty of its broad and shining stream
On whose bosom, flocked together, float the mighty
swans of steam.

I remember drifting with them till I found myself again
In the rush and roar and rattle of the engine and the
train;

And when from my surroundings something spoke of
child and wife,

It seemed the train was rumbling through a tunnel in
my life.

Then I remember something—like a sudden burst of
light—

That don't exactly tell it, but I couldn't tell it right—
A something clinging to me with its arms around my
neck—

A little girl, for instance—or an angel, I expect—

GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

For she kissed me, cried and called me "her dear papa,"
and I felt

My heart was pure virgin gold, and just about to melt—
And so it did—it melted in a mist of gleaming rain
When she took my hand and whispered, "my mama's
on the train."

There's some things I can dwell on, and get off pretty
well,

But the balance of this story I know I couldn't tell;
So I ain't going to try it, for to tell the reason why—
I'm so chicken-hearted lately I'd be certain 'most to cry.

“TIRED OUT”

“TIRED out!” Yet face and brow
Do not look aweary now,
And the eyelids lie like two
Pure, white rose-leaves washed with dew.
Was her life so hard a task?—
Strange that we forget to ask
What the lips now dumb for aye
Could have told us yesterday!

“Tired out!” A faded scrawl
Pinned upon the ragged shawl—
Nothing else to leave a clew
Even of a friend or two,
Who might come to fold the hands,
Or smooth back the dripping strands
Of her tresses, or to wet
Them anew with fond regret.

"TIRED OUT"

"Tired out!" We can but guess
Of her little happiness—
Long ago, in some fair land,
When a lover held her hand
In the dream that frees us all,
Soon or later, from its thrall—
Be it either false or true,
We, at last, must tire, too.

HARLIE

FOLD the little waxen hands
Lightly. Let your warmest tears
Speak regrets, but never fears,—

Heaven understands !

Let the sad heart, o'er the tomb,
Lift again and burst in bloom
Fragrant with a prayer as sweet
As the lily at your feet.

Bend and kiss the folded eyes—
They are only feigning sleep
While their truant glances peep
Into Paradise.

See, the face, though cold and white,
Holds a hint of some delight
E'en with Death, whose finger-tips
Rest upon the frozen lips.

HARLIE

When, within the years to come,
Vanished echoes live once more—
Pattering footsteps on the floor,
 And the sounds of home,—
Let your arms in fancy fold
Little Harlie as of old—
As of old and as he waits
At the City's golden gates.

A TEST OF LOVE

"Now who shall say he loves me not."

HE wooed her first in an atmosphere
Of tender and low-breathed sighs ;
But the pang of her laugh went cutting clear
To the soul of the enterprise ;
"You beg so pert for the kiss you seek
It reminds me, John," she said,
"Of a poodle pet that jumps to 'speak'
For a crumb or a crust of bread."

And flashing up, with the blush that flushed
His face like a tableau light,
Came a bitter threat that his white lips hushed
To a chill, hoarse-voiced "Good night !"
And again her laugh, like a knell that tolled,
And a wide-eyed mock surprise,—
"Why, John," she said, "you have taken cold
In the chill air of your sighs !"

A TEST OF LOVE

And then he turned, and with teeth tight-clenched,
He told her he hated her,—
That his love for her from his heart he wrenched
Like a corpse from a sepulcher.
And then she called him "A ghoul all red
With the quintessence of crimes"—
"But I know you love me now," she said,
And kissed him a hundred times.

FATHER WILLIAM

A NEW VERSION BY LEE O. HARRIS AND JAMES

WHITCOMB RILEY

“You are old, Father William, and though one would
think

All the veins in your body were dry,
Yet the end of your nose is red as a pink;
I beg your indulgence, but why?”

“You see,” Father William replied, “in my youth—
’Tis a thing I must ever regret—
It worried me so to keep up with the truth
That my nose has a flush on it yet.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “and I grieve to detect
A feverish gleam in your eye;
Yet I’m willing to give you full time to reflect.
Now, pray, can you answer me why?”

“Alas,” said the sage, “I was tempted to choose
Me a wife in my earlier years,

FATHER WILLIAM

And the grief, when I think that she didn't refuse,
Has reddened my eyelids with tears."

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,
"And you never touch wine, you declare,
Yet you sleep with your feet at the head of the bed;
Now answer me that if you dare."

"In my youth," said the sage, "I was told it was true
That the world turned around in the night;
I cherished the lesson, my boy, and I knew
That at morning my feet would be right."

"You are old," said the youth, "and it grieved me to note,
As you recently fell through the door,
That 'full as a goose' had been chalked on your coat;
Now answer me that, I implore."

"My boy," said the sage, "I have answered you fair,
While you stuck to the point in dispute,
But this is a personal matter, and there
Is my answer—the toe of my boot."

MORTON

THE warm pulse of the nation has grown chill;
The muffled heart of Freedom, like a knell,
Throbs solemnly for one whose earthly will
Wrought every mission well.

Whose glowing reason towered above the sea
Of dark disaster like a beacon light,
And led the Ship of State, unscathed and free,
Out of the gulfs of night.

When Treason, rabid-mouthed, and fanged with steel,
Lay growling o'er the bones of fallen braves,
And when beneath the tyrant's iron heel
Were ground the hearts of slaves,

And War, with all his train of horrors, leapt
Across the fortress-walls of Liberty
With havoc, e'en the marble goddess wept
With tears of blood to see.

MORTON

Throughout it all his brave and kingly mind
Kept loyal vigil o'er the patriot's vow,
And yet the flag he lifted to the wind
Is drooping o'er him now.

And Peace, all pallid from the battle-field
When first again it hovered o'er the land
And found his voice above it like a shield,
Had nestled in his hand.

.

O throne of State and gilded Senate halls—
Though thousands throng your aisles and galleries—
How empty are ye! and what silence falls
On your hilarities!

And yet, though great the loss to us appears,
The consolation sweetens all our pain—
Though hushed the voice, through all the coming years
Its echoes will remain.

AN AUTUMNAL EXTRAVAGANZA

WITH a sweeter voice than birds
Dare to twitter in their sleep,
Pipe for me a tune of words,
Till my dancing fancies leap
Into freedom vaster far
Than the realms of Reason are!
Sing for me with wilder fire
Than the lover ever sung,
From the time he twanged the lyre
When the world was baby-young.

O my maiden Autumn, you—
You have filled me through and through
With a passion so intense,
All of earthly eloquence
Fails, and falls, and swoons away
In your presence. Like as one
Who essays to look the sun

AN AUTUMNAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Fairly in the face, I say,
Though my eyes you dazzle blind
Greater dazzled is my mind.

So, my Autumn, let me kneel

At your feet and worship you!
Be my sweetheart; let me feel

Your caress; and tell me too
Why your smiles bewilder me—
Glancing into laughter, then
Trancing into calm again,
Till your meaning drowning lies
In the dim depths of your eyes.

Let me see the things you see
Down the depths of mystery!
Blow aside the hazy veil

From the daylight of your face
With the fragrance-laden gale
Of your spicy breath and chase
Every dimple to its place.

Lift your gypsy finger-tips
To the roses of your lips,
And fling down to me a bud—

But an unblown kiss—but one—
It shall blossom in my blood,
Even after life is done—

AN AUTUMNAL EXTRAVAGANZA

When I dare to touch the brow
Your rare hair is veiling now—
When the rich, red-golden strands
Of the treasure in my hands
Shall be all of worldly worth
Heaven lifted from the earth,
Like a banner to have set
On its highest minaret.

THE MERMAN

I

WHO would be
A merman gay,
Singing alone,
Sitting alone,
With a mermaid's knee,
For instance—hey—
For a throne?

II

I would be a merman gay;
I would sit and sing the whole day long;
I would fill my lungs with the strongest brine,
And squirt it up in a spray of song,
And soak my head in my liquid voice;
I'd curl my tail in curves divine,
And let each curve in a kink rejoice.

THE MERMAN

I'd tackle the mermaids under the sea,
And yank 'em around till they yanked me,
Sportively, sportively;
And then we would wiggle away, away,
To the pea-green groves on the coast of day,
Chasing each other sportively.

III

There would be neither moon nor star;
But the waves would twang like a wet guitar—
Low thunder and thrum in the darkness grum—
Neither moon nor star;
We would shriek aloud in the dismal dales—
Shriek at each other and squawk and squeal,
"All night!" rakishly, rakishly;
They would pelt me with oysters and wiggletails,
Laughing and clapping their hands at me,
"All night!" prankishly, prankishly;
But I would toss them back in mine,
Lobsters and turtles of quaint design;
Then leaping out in an abrupt way,
I'd snatch them bald in my devilish glee,
And skip away when they snatched at me,
Fiendishly, fiendishly.

THE MERMAN

O, what a jolly life I'd lead,
Ah, what a "bang-up" life indeed!
Soft are the mermaids under the sea—
We would live merrily, merrily.

A SUMMER SUNRISE

AFTER LEE O. HARRIS

THE master-hand whose pencils trace
This wondrous landscape of the morn,
Is but the sun, whose glowing face
Reflects the rapture and the grace
Of inspiration Heaven-born.

And yet with vision-dazzled eyes,
I see the lotos-lands of old,
Where odorous breezes fall and rise,
And mountains, peering in the skies,
Stand ankle-deep in lakes of gold.

And, spangled with the shine and shade,
I see the rivers ravelled out
In strands of silver, slowly fade
In threads of light along the glade
Where truant roses hide and pout.

A SUMMER SUNRISE

The tamarind on gleaming sands
Droops drowsily beneath the heat;
And bowed as though aweary, stands
The stately palm, with lazy hands
That fold their shadows round his feet.

And mistily, as through a veil,
I catch the glances of a sea
Of sapphire, dimpled with a gale
Toward Colchis blowing, where the sail
Of Jason's Argo beckons me.

And gazing on and farther yet,
I see the isles enchanted, bright
With fretted spire and parapet,
And gilded mosque and minaret,
That glitter in the crimson light.

But as I gaze, the city's walls
Are keenly smitten with a gleam
Of pallid splendor, that appalls
The fancy as the ruin falls
In ashen embers of a dream.

A SUMMER SUNRISE

Yet over all the waking earth

The tears of night are brushed away,
And eyes are lit with love and mirth,
And benisons of richest worth

Go up to bless the new-born day.

AN OLD YEAR'S ADDRESS

"I HAVE twankled the strings of the twinkering rain;
I have burnished the meteor's mail;
I have bridled the wind
When he whinnied and whined
With a bunch of stars tied to his tail;
But my sky-rocket hopes, hanging over the past,
Must fuzzle and fazzle and fizzle at last!"

I had waded far out in a drizzling dream,
And my fancies had spattered my eyes
With a vision of dread,
With a number ten head,
And a form of diminutive size—
That wavered and wagged in a singular way
As he wound himself up and proceeded to say,—

"I have trimmed all my corns with the blade of the moon;
I have picked every tooth with a star:

AN OLD YEAR'S ADDRESS

And I thrill to recall
That I went through it all
Like a tune through a tickled guitar.
I have ripped up the rainbow and ravelled the ends
When the sun and myself were particular friends."

And pausing again, and producing a sponge
And wiping the tears from his eyes,
He sank in a chair
With a technical air
That he struggled in vain to disguise,—
For a sigh that he breathed, as I over him leant,
Was haunted and hot with a peppermint scent.

"Alas!" he continued in quavering tones
As a pang rippled over his face,
"The life was too fast
For the pleasure to last
In my very unfortunate case;
And I'm going"—he said, as he turned to adjust
A fuse in his bosom,—“I'm going to—BUST!"

I shrieked and awoke with the sullen che-boom
Of a five-pounder filling my ears;

AN OLD YEAR'S ADDRESS

And a roseate bloom
Of a light in the room

I saw through the mist of my tears,—
But my guest of the night never saw the display,
He had fuzzled and fazzled and fizzled away!

A NEW YEAR'S PLAINT

*"In words like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more."*

—TENNYSON.

THE bells that lift their yawning throats
And lolling tongues with wrangling cries
Flung up in harsh, discordant notes,
As though in anger, at the skies,—
Are filled with echoings replete,
With purest tinkles of delight—
So I would have a something sweet
Ring in the song I sing to-night.

As when a blotch of ugly guise
On some poor artist's naked floor
Becomes a picture in his eyes,
And he forgets that he is poor,—

A NEW YEAR'S PLAINT

So I look out upon the night,
That ushers in the dawning year,
And in a vacant blur of light
I see these fantasies appear.

I see a home whose windows gleam
Like facets of a mighty gem
That some poor king's distorted dream
Has fastened in his diadem.
And I behold a throng that reels
In revelry of dance and mirth,
With hearts of love beneath their heels,
And in their bosoms hearts of earth.

O Luxury, as false and grand
As in the mystic tales of old,
When genii answered man's command,
And built of nothing halls of gold!
O Banquet, bright with pallid jets,
And tropic blooms, and vases caught
In palms of naked statuettes,
Ye can not color as ye ought!

For, crouching in the storm without,
I see the figure of a child,

A NEW YEAR'S PLAIN

In little ragged roundabout,
Who stares with eyes that never smiled—
And he, in fancy can but taste
The dainties of the kingly fare,
And pick the crumbs that go to waste
Where none have learned to kneel in prayer.

Go, Pride, and throw your goblet down—
The “merry greeting” best appears
On loving lips that never drown
Its worth but in the wine of tears;
Go, close your coffers like your hearts,
And shut your hearts against the poor,
Go, strut through all your pretty parts,
But take the “Welcome” from your door.

LUTHER BENSON

AFTER READING HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

POOR victim of that vulture curse
That hovers o'er the universe,
With ready talons quick to strike
In every human heart alike,
And cruel beak to stab and tear
In virtue's vitals everywhere,—
You need no sympathy of mine
To aid you, for a strength divine
Encircles you, and lifts you clear
Above this earthly atmosphere.

And yet I can but call you poor,
As, looking through the open door
Of your sad life, I only see
A broad landscape of misery,
And catch through mists of pitying tears
The ruins of your younger years:
I see a father's shielding arm

LUTHER BENSON

Thrown round you in a wild alarm—
Struck down, and powerless to free
Or aid you in your agony.

I see a happy home grow dark
And desolate—the latest spark
Of hope is passing in eclipse—
The prayer upon a mother's lips
Has fallen with her latest breath
In ashes on the lips of death—
I see a penitent who reels,
And writhes, and clasps his hands, and kneels,
And moans for mercy for the sake
Of that fond heart he dared to break.

And lo! as when in Galilee
A voice above the troubled sea
Commanded "Peace; be still!" the flood
That rolled in tempest waves of blood
Within you, fell in calm so sweet
It ripples round the Saviour's feet;
And all your nobler nature thrilled
With brightest hope and faith, and filled
Your thirsty soul with joy and peace
And praise to Him who gave release.

WHEN EVENING SHADOWS FALL

WHEN evening shadows fall,
She hangs her cares away
Like empty garments on the wall
That hides her from the day;
And while old memories throng,
And vanished voices call,
She lifts her grateful heart in song
When evening shadows fall.

Her weary hands forget
The burdens of the day.
The weight of sorrow and regret
In music rolls away;
And from the day's dull tomb,
That holds her in its thrall,
Her soul springs up in lily-bloom
When evening shadows fall.

WHEN EVENING SHADOWS FALL

O weary heart and hand,
 Go bravely to the strife—
No victory is half so grand
 As that which conquers life!
One day shall yet be thine—
 The day that waits for all
Whose prayerful eyes are things divine
 When evening shadows fall.

A FANTASY

A FANTASY that came to me
As wild and wantonly designed
As ever any dream might be
Unravelled from a madman's mind,—
A tangle-work of tissue, wrought
By cunning of the spider-brain,
And woven, in an hour of pain,
To trap the giddy flies of thought.

I stood beneath a summer moon
All swollen to uncanny girth,
And hanging, like the sun at noon,
Above the center of the earth;
But with a sad and sallow light,
As it had sickened of the night
And fallen in a pallid swoon.
Around me I could hear the rush
Of sullen winds, and feel the whirl
Of unseen wings apast me brush

A FANTASY

Like phantoms round a sepulcher;
And, like a carpeting of plush,
A lawn unrolled beneath my feet,
Bespangled o'er with flowers as sweet
To look upon as those that nod
Within the garden-fields of God,
But odorless as those that blow
In ashes in the shades below.

And on my hearing fell a storm
Of gusty music, sadder yet
Than every whimper of regret
That sobbing utterance could form,
And patched with scraps of sound that seemed
Torn out of tunes that demons dreamed,
And pitched to such a piercing key,
It stabbed the ear with agony;
And when at last it lulled and died,
I stood aghast and terrified.
I shuddered and I shut my eyes,
And still could see, and feel aware
Some mystic presence waited there;
And staring, with a dazed surprise,
I saw a creature so divine

A FANTASY

That never subtle thought of mine
May reproduce to inner sight
So fair a vision of delight.

A syllable of dew that drips
From out a lily's laughing lips
Could not be sweeter than the word
I listened to, yet never heard.—
For, oh, the woman hiding there
Within the shadows of her hair,
Spake to me in an undertone
So delicate, my soul alone
But understood it as a moan
Of some weak melody of wind
A heavenward breeze had left behind.

A tracery of trees, grotesque
Against the sky, behind her seen,
Like shapeless shapes of arabesque
Wrought in an Oriental screen;
And tall, austere, and statuesque
She loomed before it—e'en as though
The spirit-hand of Angelo
Had chiselled her to life complete,
With chips of moonshine round her feet.

A FANTASY

And I grew jealous of the dusk,
To see it softly touch her face,
As lover-like, with fond embrace,
It folded round her like a husk :
But when the glitter of her hand,
Like wasted glory, beckoned me,
My eyes grew blurred and dull and dim—
My vision failed—I could not see—
I could not stir—I could but stand,
Till, quivering in every limb,
I flung me prone, as though to swim
The tide of grass whose waves of green
Went rolling ocean-wide between
My helpless shipwrecked heart and her
Who claimed me for a worshipper.

And writhing thus in my despair,
I heard a weird, unearthly sound,
That seemed to lift me from the ground
And hold me floating in the air.
I looked, and lo ! I saw her bow
Above a harp within her hands ;
A crown of blossoms bound her brow,
And on her harp were twisted strands
Of silken starlight, rippling o'er

A FANTASY

With music never heard before
By mortal ears; and, at the strain,
I felt my Spirit snap its chain
And break away,—and I could see
It as it turned and fled from me
To greet its mistress, where she smiled
To see the phantom dancing wild
And wizard-like before the spell
Her mystic fingers knew so well.

A DREAM

I DREAMED I was a spider ;
A big, fat, hungry spider ;
A lusty, rusty spider
 With a dozen palsied limbs ;
With a dozen limbs that dangled
Where three wretched flies were tangled
And their buzzing wings were strangled
 In the middle of their hymns.

And I mocked them like a demon—
A demoniacal demon
Who delights to be a demon
 For the sake of sin alone ;
And with fondly false embraces
Did I weave my mystic laces
Round their horror-stricken faces
 Till I muffled every groan.

A DREAM

And I smiled to see them weeping,
For to see an insect weeping,
Sadly, sorrowfully weeping,
 Fattens every spider's mirth;
And to note a fly's heart quaking,
And with anguish ever aching
Till you see it slowly breaking
 Is the sweetest thing on earth.

I experienced a pleasure,
Such a highly-flavored pleasure,
Such intoxicating pleasure,
 That I drank of it like wine;
And my mortal soul engages
That no spider on the pages
Of the history of ages
 Felt a rapture more divine.

I careened around and capered—
Madly, mystically capered—
For three days and nights I capered
 Round my web in wild delight;
Till with fierce ambition burning,
And an inward thirst and yearning
I hastened my returning
 With a fiendish appetite.

A DREAM

And I found my victims dying,
“Ha!” they whispered, “we are dying!”
Faintly whispered, “We are dying,
And our earthly course is run.”
And the scene was so impressing
That I breathed a special blessing,
As I killed them with caressing
And devoured them one by one.

BRYANT

THE harp has fallen from the master's hand ;
Mute is the music, voiceless are the strings,
Save such faint discord as the wild wind flings
In sad Æolian murmurs through the land.
The tide of melody, whose billows grand
Flowed o'er the world in clearest utterings,
Now, in receding current, sobs and sings
That song we never wholly understand.
. . . O, eyes where glorious prophecies belong,
And gracious reverence to humbly bow,
And kingly spirit, proud, and pure, and strong ;
O pallid minstrel with the laurelled brow,
And lips so long attuned to sacred song,
How sweet must be the Heavenly anthem now !

LIBERTY

NEW CASTLE, JULY 4, 1878

I

For a hundred years the pulse of time
Has throbbed for Liberty,
For a hundred years the grand old clime
Columbia has been free;
For a hundred years our country's love,
The Stars and Stripes, has waved above.

Away far out on the gulf of years—
Misty and faint and white
Through the fogs of wrong—a sail appears,
And the Mayflower heaves in sight,
And drifts again, with its little flock
Of a hundred souls, on Plymouth Rock.

Do you see them there—as long, long since
Through the lens of History;

LIBERTY

Do you see them there as their chieftain prints
In the snow his bended knee,
And lifts his voice through the wintry blast
In thanks for a peaceful home at last?

Though the skies are dark and the coast is bleak,
And the storm is wild and fierce,
Its frozen flake on the upturned cheek
Of the Pilgrim melts in tears,
And the dawn that springs from the darkness there
Is the morning light of an answered prayer.

The morning light of the day of Peace
That gladdens the aching eyes,
And gives to the soul that sweet release
That the present verifies,—
Nor a snow so deep, nor a wind so chill
To quench the flame of a freeman's will!

II

Days of toil when the bleeding hand
Of the pioneer grew numb,
When the untilled tracts of the barren land
Where the weary ones had come

LIBERTY

Could offer naught from a fruitful soil
To stay the strength of the stranger's toil.

Days of pain, when the heart beat low,
And the empty hours went by
Pitiless, with the wail of woe
And the moan of Hunger's cry—
When the trembling hands upraised in prayer
Had only the strength to hold them there.

Days when the voice of hope had fled—
Days when the eyes grown weak
Were folded to, and the tears they shed
Were frost on a frozen cheek—
When the storm bent down from the skies and gave
A shroud of snow for the Pilgrim's grave.

Days at last when the smiling sun
Glanced down from a summer sky,
And a music rang where the rivers run,
And the waves went laughing by;
And the rose peeped over the mossy bank
While the wild deer stood in the stream and drank.

And the birds sang out so loud and good,
In a symphony so clear

LIBERTY

And pure and sweet that the woodman stood
With his axe upraised to hear,
And to shape the words of the tongue unknown
Into a language all his own:—

1

Sing! every bird, to-day!
Sing for the sky so clear,
And the gracious breath of the atmosphere
Shall waft our cares away.
Sing! sing! for the sunshine free;
Sing through the land from sea to sea;
Lift each voice in the highest key
And sing for Liberty!

2

Sing for the arms that fling
Their fetters in the dust
And lift their hands in higher trust
Unto the one Great King;
Sing for the patriot heart and hand;
Sing for the country they have planned;
Sing that the world may understand
This is Freedom's land!

LIBERTY

3

*Sing in the tones of prayer,
Sing till the soaring soul
Shall float above the world's control
In Freedom everywhere!
Sing for the good that is to be,
Sing for the eyes that are to see
The land where man at last is free,
O sing for Liberty!*

III

A holy quiet reigned, save where the hand
Of labor sent a murmur through the land,
And happy voices in a harmony
Taught every lisping breeze a melody.
A nest of cabins, where the smoke upcurled,
A breathing incense to the other world.
A land of languor from the sun of noon,
That fainted slowly to the pallid moon,
Till stars, thick-scattered in the garden-land
Of Heaven by the great Jehovah's hand,
Had blossomed into light to look upon
The dusky warrior with his arrow drawn,
As skulking from the covert of the night

LIBERTY

With serpent cunning and a fiend's delight,
With murderous spirit, and a yell of hate
The voice of Hell might tremble to translate:
When the fond mother's tender lullaby
Went quavering in shrieks all suddenly,
And baby lips were dabbled with the stain
Of crimson at the bosom of the slain,
And peaceful homes and fortunes ruined—lost
In smouldering embers of the holocaust.

Yet on and on, through years of gloom and strife,
Our country struggled into stronger life;
Till colonies, like footprints in the sand,
Marked Freedom's pathway winding through the land—
And not the footprints to be swept away
Before the storm we hatched in Boston Bay,—
But footprints where the path of war begun
That led to Bunker Hill and Lexington,—
For he who "dared to lead where others dared
To follow" found the promise there declared
Of Liberty, in blood of Freedom's host
Baptized to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

Oh, there were times when every patriot breast
Was riotous with sentiments expressed

LIBERTY

In tones that swelled in volume till the sound
Of lusty war itself was well-nigh drowned.
Oh, those were times when happy eyes with tears
Brimmed o'er as all the misty doubts and fears
Were washed away, and Hope with gracious mien,
Reigned from her throne again a sovereign queen.
Until at last, upon a day like this
When flowers were blushing at the summer's kiss,
And when the sky was cloudless as the face
Of some sweet infant in its angel grace,—
There came a sound of music, thrown afloat
Upon the balmy air—a clanging note
Reiterated from the brazen throat
Of Independence Bell: A sound so sweet,
The clamoring throngs of people in the street
Were stilled as at the solemn voice of prayer,
And heads were bowed, and lips were moving there
That made no sound—until the spell had passed,
And then, as when all sudden comes the blast
Of some tornado, came the cheer on cheer
Of every eager voice, while far and near
The echoing bells upon the atmosphere
Set glorious rumors floating, till the ear
Of every listening patriot tingled clear,
And thrilled with joy and jubilee to hear.

LIBERTY

*Stir all your echoes up,
O Independence Bell,
And pour from your inverted cup
The song we love so well.*

*Lift high your happy voice,
And swing your iron tongue
Till syllables of praise rejoice
That never yet were sung.*

*Ring in the gleaming dawn
Of Freedom—Toll the knell
Of Tyranny, and then ring on,
O Independence Bell.—*

*Ring on, and drown the moan
Above the patriot slain,
Till sorrow's voice shall catch the tone
And join the glad refrain.*

*Ring out the wounds of wrong
And rankle in the breast;
Your music like a slumber-song
Will lull revenge to rest.*

LIBERTY

*Ring out from Occident
To Orient, and peal
From continent to continent
The mighty joy you feel.*

*Ring! Independence Bell!
Ring on till worlds to be
Shall listen to the tale you tell
Of love and Liberty!*

IV

O Liberty—the dearest word
A bleeding country ever heard,—
We lay our hopes upon thy shrine
And offer up our lives for thine.
You gave us many happy years
Of peace and plenty ere the tears
A mourning country wept were dried
Above the graves of those who died
Upon thy threshold. And again
When newer wars were bred, and men
Went marching in the cannon's breath
And died for thee, and loved the death,
While, high above them, gleaming bright,

LIBERTY

The dear old flag remained in sight,
And lighted up their dying eyes
With smiles that brightened Paradise.
O Liberty, it is thy power
To gladden us in every hour
Of gloom, and lead us by thy hand
As little children through a land
Of bud and blossom; while the days
Are filled with sunshine, and thy praise
Is warbled in the roundelays
Of joyous birds, and in the song
Of waters, murmuring along
The paths of peace, whose flowery fringe
Has roses finding deeper tinge
Of crimson, looking on themselves
Reflected—leaning from the shelves
Of cliff and crag and mossy mound
Of emerald splendor shadow-drowned.—
We hail thy presence, as you come
With bugle blast and rolling drum,
And booming guns and shouts of glee
Commingled in a symphony
That thrills the worlds that throng to see
The glory of thy pageantry.
And with thy praise, we breathe a prayer

LIBERTY

That God who leaves you in our care
May favor us from this day on
With thy dear presence—till the dawn
Of Heaven, breaking on thy face,
Lights up thy first abiding-place.

T. C. PHILIPS

O NOBLE heart, and brave, impetuous hand!
So all engrossed in work of public weal
Thou couldst not pause thy own distress to feel
While maladies of Wrong oppressed the land.
The hopes that marshalled at thy pen's command
To cheer the Right, had not the power to heal
The ever-aching wounds thou didst conceal
Beneath a front so stoically bland
That no one guessed thy inward agony,—
Until the Master, leaning from His throne,
Heard some soul wailing in an undertone,
And bending lower down, discovered thee,
And clasped thy weary hand within His own
And lifted thee to rest eternally.

A DREAM UNFINISHED

ONLY a dream unfinished ; only a form at rest
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful breast.

And the lonesome light of summer through the open
 doorway falls,
But it wakes no laugh in the parlor—no voice in the
 vacant halls.

It throws no spell of music over the slumberous air ;
It meets no step on the carpet—no form in the easy chair.

It finds no queenly presence blessing the solitude
With the gracious benediction of royal womanhood.

It finds no willowy figure tilting the cage that swings
With the little pale canary that forgets the song he sings.

No face at the open window to welcome the fragrant
 breeze ;

No touch at the old piano to waken the sleeping keys.

The idle book lies open, and the folded leaf is pressed
Over the half-told story while death relates the rest.

A DREAM UNFINISHED

Only a dream unfinished ; only a form at rest,
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful breast.

The light steals into the corner where the darkest
 shadows are,
And sweeps with its golden fingers the strings of the
 mute guitar.

And over the drooping mosses it clammers the rustic
 stand,
And over the ivy's tresses it trails a trembling hand.

But it brings no smile from the darkness—it calls no
 face from the gloom—
No song flows out of the silence that aches in the empty
 room.

And we look in vain for the dawning in the depths of
 our despair,
Where the weary voice goes wailing through the empty
 aisles of prayer.

And the hands reach out through the darkness for the
 touches we have known
When the icy palms lay warmly in the pressure of our
 own :

A DREAM UNFINISHED

When the folded eyes were gleaming with a glory God
designed

To light a way to Heaven by the smiles they left behind.

Only a dream unfinished ; only a form at rest

With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful breast.

THE VISION OF RABBI BEN ISAAC

For three score years my wandering feet have strayed
Along a path wherein no footprint lay
Of Him, who of the cross a guide-board made
To point me out the way.

With open eyes I dreamed that I was dead—
Dead to all outward semblance, though I lay
With some old scrap of reason in my head
That would not fade away.

And peering up in wonderment I saw
My floating spirit plume its wings elate,
Yet gazing upward with a look of awe,
It seemed to hesitate.

"Go on!" I called to it. "Leap into space,
And sweep a way to glory with thy wings!"
"Alas!" it answered back, with troubled face,
"They are such trembling things!"

THE VISION OF RABBI BEN ISAAC

And hovering above me, spread them wide,
And all their glossy plumage o'er my eyes
Shook out in downy splendor, crimson-dyed
With hues of Paradise.

"Nay, glorious things are they," I cried, amazed,
And veiled my vision from their dazzling light—
"So, get thee gone—their maker must be praised"—
And upward through the night

It lifted like a meteor, and sailed
Across the gulf of darkness like a flame,
While down the smouldering wake behind it trailed
The ashes of my name.

It called to me—not larger than a flake
Of starlight did it glimmer through the gloom—
"Pray for me," fell the voice, "for Jesus' sake!
I see the heavens bloom."

And loathful to myself I whispered then,
As wholly from my gaze the glimmer went—
"O Lord, through Christ, receive my soul, Amen."
And like an instrument

THE VISION OF RABBI BEN ISAAC

Of music in some heavenly tumult tipped,
Outpouring the elixir of its voice,
Down-showering upon my senses dripped
The utterance, "Rejoice !

"God listens, for the angels at the door
Are swarming out and in and out again,
And o'er and round about me evermore
They sing 'Good-will to men !' "

Then suddenly the voice in quaverings
Fell wailingly—"Alas ! for I alone
Of all the glorious throng have tarnished wings
That Heaven will not own.

"The angel Truth has pityingly said
That every plume impure Christ will condemn,
And that the stain self-righteousness is red
As blood on all of them."

Then to my soul I cried aloud : "Return
That I may bow my head in holier prayer,
And all the recompense of good I earn
Shall blossom everywhere."

THE VISION OF RABBI BEN ISAAC

“Not so.” It answered, as in some surprise—

“The angel Faith has whispered, ‘Look above,’
And shading with her wings my dazzled eyes,
Points out the angel Love,

“Who, weeping, bends above me, and her tears
Baptize me, and her sister Mercy trips
Along the golden clouds, and Christ appears
With sorrow on His lips”—

Then silence, and as one who vainly wars
With inner strife: “Come back to me!” I cried,
And pealing down a pathway of the stars
A ringing voice replied—

“Now is thy soul’s probation so complete
It may but answer thee with one farewell;”
And, filtered through the gloom, lo! at my feet
A snow-white feather fell.

UNSPOKEN

O HE can hold her hand, and full and fair
Look in her face and fling her smile for smile,
And loosen from his lips such words the while
As make him wonder how his tongue may dare
Such dalliance. And when in wordless prayer
His heart lies gasping, he can reconcile
His talk to that glib, recitative style
The silly gossip chatters everywhere.
But O, one utterance—one stormy word
Is fastened down in silence pitiless;
No struggling murmur of it ever heard—
No echo welling out of his distress
To plead aloud its mission long deferred,
And leap up fountain-like in thankfulness.

Yet he is bold enough in dreams—last night
He held her in his arms, and in the strands
Of her down-streaming hair he bathed his hands,
And fretted it in golden foam, as bright

UNSPOKEN

And billowy it floated o'er his sight.

Her breath was like a breeze of fairy-lands
That reels above a bed of bloom and fans
Its fragrant life away in sheer delight.

So even did he whisper through the sighs

That quavered as his spirit stayed to drain
The mad intoxication of her eyes;

Then felt a pang of pleasure keen as pain—
A barb of ecstasy shot arrow-wise

In such a kiss as cleft his heart in twain.

But waking, when the morning of her face

Shines full upon him, voiceless has he grown,

Save that inanimately mirthful tone

That ripples ever on its foolish race

And finds nor rest nor joyance in the chase:

And so it is a never-ending moan

Wails on unheard, unheeded, and unknown
But by the echoes of its hiding-place.

What poverty like this?—to laugh, and sing,

And babble like a brook in summer-time;

To circle o'er the world on airy wing,

Or clamber into Heaven on rounds of rhyme,
When in the soul, forever lingering,

There lives a love unspeakably sublime.

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

If you never heard of Hunchley, I would say in his behalf,

He's as jovial a bachelor as ever raised a laugh,
And as fond of boon companions, yet withal as tried and true

A gentleman of honor as the writer ever knew.

And if he has a weakness, as a weakness it depends
On a certain strength of kindness he bestows upon his friends;

Being simple, undesigning, and of courteous address,
All hearts are open to him and his friends are numberless.

And this is how it happened some discrepancies befell
At the late Thanksgiving dinner which began at his hotel,

Where, it seems, the guests invited were selected more
to be

In keeping with his bounty than the laws of harmony.

For there among the number were two rivals of the press,
Who had paragraphed each other with prolonged maliciousness,

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

And in their respective columns had a thousand times
declared

That the other fellow "daresn't" when the other fellow
dared.

And cheek by jowl together were two members of the bar,
Politically, legally, and socially at war,

Who denounced each other daily, and in every local
phrase

That could make the matter binding all the balance of
their days.

Of the medical fraternity ("fraternity" is good)

There were four or five disciples of the healing brother-
hood—

Botanic and eclectic, and some others that persist

In orthographic wranglings, such as "homeopathist";

And an ordinary actor, and an actor of renown,

Whose cue, it seemed, for smiling was the other actor's
frown;

And the most loquacious author my remembrance can
recall,

And a little bench-leg poet that couldn't talk at all.

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

In fact, the guests assembled, as they gathered round the
feast

Wore expressions such as savored not of thankfulness
the least,

And to a close observer were suggestive of the dread
And shadowy disaster that was hanging overhead.

Now the simple Mr. Hunchley had invited, with the rest,
A melancholy pastor, and, in honor of the guest
And the notable occasion, he desired a special "grace,"
Which the thankful pastor offered with a very thankless
face.

And at this unhappy juncture came a journalistic pun,
Which the rival designated as a most atrocious one,
At which the grim projector, with a covert look of hate,
Shook a little dust of "fine-cut" in the other fellow's
plate.

And the viands circulated, with a sudden gust of wit
From a lawyer—instituted for the other's benefit,—
Then the victim spun a story with exasperating mirth
That reflected his opponent as of small judicial worth.

Then a medical discussion on the stomach swelled the
gale

And the literary appetite began to droop and fail;

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

While a sportive reminiscence from the absent-minded
host

Blanched the features of the pastor to the pallor of a
ghost.

And a deep sonorous murmur slowly grew, and grew,
and grew

Till the similes that suited it were singularly few,—
For even now at leisure, and with nothing else to do,
A task of lesser promise I can say I never knew.

I have heard the tread of armies as they marched upon
the foe,

And, among the Alps, have listened to the avalanche of
snow ;

I have leaned upon Niagara, and heard the wailing tide
Where it leaps its awful chasm in unending suicide :

I have heard the trampling footsteps of the roaring hur-
ricane

As he lashed his tail of lightning and tossed his shaggy
mane ;

I have heard the cannonading of the devastating storm,
And the falling politician howling loudly for reform :

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

But no mystic voice of terror ever bred of Nature's law
Could awake the sense of wonder and dismay, and doubt
and awe

That thrilled my inmost being as the conversation
swelled

To a mad, chaotic focus in which everybody yelled.

There's a vision in my fancy, misty-like and undefined,
Of an actor with his collar loose and sticking up behind,
And another (though I hesitate to chronicle the fact)
Writhing underneath the table in a wild contortion act.

There's a shadowy remembrance of a group of three or
four

Who were seemingly dissecting another on the floor;
And the form of Mr. Hunchley dancing round a couple
more,

And a phantom with a chicken leg a-breaking for the
door.

And here my memory wavers—I recall the heated breath
Of the gentleman who held me with the very grip of
death,

And as my reeling pencil scrawls the scene of my release
I'm as full of glad thanksgiving as my soul is full of
peace.

THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

But this is how it happened these discrepancies befell
At the late Thanksgiving dinner Hunchley gave at his
hotel,
Where, it seems, the guests invited were selected more
to be
In keeping with his bounty than the laws of harmony.

APART

I

THEY stood on either side the gate—
Though fastened with the hands of fate
A touch might lift the latch's weight.

The moonlight, with a faded grace,
Fell o'er the whiteness of her face
Like some soiled veil of bridal lace.

The fan she held went fluttering
About her mouth on restless wing
As though it were a wounded thing.

And in her breast an ache of dread
Held back the word she would have said,
And sent a weary sigh instead.

APART

II

He waited, with his eager eyes
Half muffled in a weak disguise
Of carelessness and cold surprise.

Within his breast he heard the moan :
“How desolate and all alone
And pitiless my heart has grown !”

And yet a nameless ache of dread
Held back the word he would have said,
And sent a weary sigh instead.

The long, black shadows of the trees
Whose branches wavered in the breeze,
Fell o’er them like their destinies.

They parted. Yet the wild wind saith
That two fair ghosts with failing breath
Walk hand in hand the path of death.

TO LEONAINIE

IN MEMORY OF LEONAINIE, INFANT DAUGHTER OF
W. B. AND LOTTA TITUS, THESE LINES ARE
TENDERLY INSCRIBED

“LEONAINIE!” angels missed her—
 Baby angels—they
Who behind the stars had kissed her
 Ere she came away;
And their little, wandering faces
Drooped o’er Heaven’s hiding-places
Whiter than the lily-vases
 On the Sabbath day.

“Leonainie!” crying, crying,
 Crying through the night,
Till her lisping lips replying,
 Laughing with delight,
Drew us nearer yet, and nearer
That we might the better hear her
Baby-words, and love her dearer
 Hearing not aright.

TO LEONAINIE

Only spake the little lisper
In the Angel tongue,
Fainter than a fairy whisper
Murmured in among
Dewy blossoms covered over
With the fragrant tufts of clover,
Where the minstrel honey-rover
Twanged his wings and sung.

“Leonainie!”—And the glimmer
Of her starry eyes
Faded, and the world grew dimmer,
E’en as Paradise
Blossomed with a glory brighter
Than the waning stars, and whiter
Than the dying moon, and lighter
Than the morning skies.

YE SCHOLAR

Ho! ho! Ye Scholar recketh not how lean
His lank frame waxeth in ye hectic gloom
That smeareth o'er ye dim walls of his room
His wavering shadow! Shut is he, I ween,
Like as a withered nosegay, in between
Ye musty, mildewed leaves of some volume
Of ancient lore ye moth and he consume
In jointure. Yet a something in his mien
Forbids all mockery, though quaint is he,
And eke fantastical in form and face
As that Old Knight ye Tale of Chivalry
Made mad immortally, yet spared ye grace
Of some rare virtue which we sigh to see,
And pour our laughter out most tenderly.

DEATH IS DEAD

AND did you know our old friend Death is dead?
Ah me! he died last night; my ghost was there,
And all his phantom friends from everywhere
Were sorrowfully grouped about his bed.
“I die; God help the living now!” he said
With such a ghastly pathos, I declare
The tears oozed from the blind eyes of the air
And spattered on his face in gouts of red.
And then he smiled—the dear old bony smile
That glittered on us in that crazy whim
When first our daring feet leapt the defile
Of life and ran so eagerly to him:
And so he smiled upon us, even while
The kind old sockets grew forever dim.

THE LITTLE DEAD MAN

YET NOT SO DEAD AS ANOTHER

I

O IT was a little dead man,
At peace with all the earth;
Yet I never saw a dead man
So seeming near to mirth.

His hands were meekly hidden,
At his very last request—
The right in his hip pocket,
And the other in his vest.

His collar was thrown open,
And he wore his easy clothes—
Had his ordinary boots on,
With rosin on the toes.

THE LITTLE DEAD MAN

II

And so the little dead man
Lay confined for the tomb.
The hearse was at the doorway—
The mourners in the room—

When suddenly a stranger,
Who had called the day before
With a book beneath his elbow,
Entered softly at the door,

And stood before the mourners
In his bold and brazen might,
A note-book in the left hand
And a pencil in the right.

And he turned him to the mourners
With a business air, and said :
“I must really beg your pardon,
But the gentleman that’s dead

“Was kind enough to tell me,
If I’d call around to-day
He’d be prepared to listen
To all I had to say.

THE LITTLE DEAD MAN

“And in view of that engagement,
I would gently intimate
(As it may pitch the funeral
Some dozen hours late),

“That you have my indulgence,”
And with eyelids downward thrown,
They left the little dead man
And the agent all alone.

As only stars may lighten
Up the grandeur of the plains,
And the mountains where the midnight
In her mystic beauty reigns,

So the stars must shed their glory
O'er imagination's vales,
And illuminate the story
Where the poet's pencil fails.

.

But there was a little dead man—
Ah! so very dead indeed,
They fastened down his coffin lid
With most judicious speed.

THE LITTLE DEAD MAN

And they whose latest office
Was to shroud his form from sight,
Saw a note-book in the left hand,
And a pencil in the right.

THE EMPTY SONG

“WHAT have we but an empty song?”

Said the minstrel, as he bent
To stay the fingers that trailed along
The strings of her instrument.

“The clasp of your hand is warm in mine,
And your breath on my brow is wet—
I have drunk of your lips as men drink wine,
But my heart is thirsty yet.”

The starlight shivered a little space,
And the sigh of the wind uprose
And blew a cloud o’er the moon’s wan face,
And swooned back in repose.

.

The years ooze on in a stagnant flood :
One drifts as the winds allow ;
And one writes rhymes with his heart’s own blood,
But his soul is thirsty now.

A ROSE IN OCTOBER

AN IMITATION

I

I STRAYED, all alone, where the Autumn
Had swept, in her petulant wrath:
All the flowers, that had bloomed in the garden,
She had gathered, and flung in her path.
And I saw the dead face of the lily,
Struck down, by the rain and the sleet,
And the pink, with her lashes yet weeping,
Drooped low in the dust, at my feet.

II

The leaves on the branches still swinging,
Were blanched with the crimson of death;
And the vines that still clung to the trellis,
Were palsied, and shook at a breath.

A ROSE IN OCTOBER

And I sighed: "So hath fate, like the Autumn,
Swept over my path, till I see,
As I walk through life's desolate garden
Not a rose is left blooming for me!"

III

"Heigho!" said a voice of low laughter—
"How blind are you poets!" And there,
At the gate, just in front of me, leaning,
Stood Rosalind May, I declare!
I stammered, confused, for the moment;
But was blest for the rest of my life,
For my Rose of October there promised
She'd bloom for me, aye, as—my wife.

THE LITTLE OLD POEM THAT NOBODY READS

THE little old poem that nobody reads
 Blooms in a crowded space,
Like a ground-vine blossom, so low in the weeds
 That nobody sees its face—
 Unless, perchance, the reader's eye
 Stares through a yawn, and hurries by,
 For no one wants, or loves, or heeds
 The little old poem that nobody reads.

The little old poem that nobody reads
 Was written—where?—and when?
Maybe a hand of goodly deeds
 Thrilled as it held the pen :
 Maybe the fountain whence it came
 Was a heart brimmed o'er with tears of shame,
 And maybe its creed is the worst of creeds—
 The little old poem that nobody reads.

THE LITTLE OLD POEM THAT NOBODY READS

But, little old poem that nobody reads,
Holding you here above
The wound of a heart that warmly bleeds
For all that knows not love,
I well believe if the old World knew
As dear a friend as I find in you,
That friend would tell it that all it needs
Is the little old poem that nobody reads.

LINES

ON HEARING A COW BAWL IN A DEEP FIT OF DEJECTION
ON THE EVENING OF JULY 3, A. D. 1879

PORTENTOUS sound ! mysteriously vast
And awful in the grandeur of refrain
That lifts the listener's hair as it swells past,
And pours in turbid currents down the lane.

The small boy at the wood-pile, in a dream
Slow trails the meat rind o'er the listless saw ;
The chickens roosting o'er him on the beam
Uplift their drowsy heads with cootered awe.

The "gung-oigh !" of the pump is strangely stilled :
The smoke-house door bangs once emphatic'ly
Then bangs no more, but leaves the silence filled
With one lorn plaint's despotic minstrelsy.

LINES

Yet I would join thy sorrowing madrigal,
Most melancholy cow, and sing of thee
Full-hearted through my tears, for, after all,
'Tis very kine in you to sing for me.

FRIEND OF A WAYWARD HOUR

FRIEND of a wayward hour, you came
Like some good ghost, and went the same;
And I within the haunted place
Sit smiling on your vanished face,
And talking with—your name.

But thrice the pressure of your hand—
First hail—congratulations—and
Your last “God bless you!” as the train
That brought you snatched you back again
Into the unknown land.

“God bless me?” Why, your very prayer
Was answered ere you asked it there,
I know—for when you came to lend
Me your kind hand, and call me friend,
God blessed me unaware.

LINES

ON RECEIVING A PRESENT FROM AN UNKNOWN FRIEND

THOU little naked statuette,
With fairy head atop,
And eyelids ever downward let,
And silence on thy lip,
Thou comest from a friend unknown,
Nor wilt confess,
E'en in mute syllables of stone,
That friend's address.

And so, still pools of gratitude
I pour out at thy feet;
And could it mirror back thy nude
Perfection half as sweet
As rests within this heart of mine
That friend unknown,
Why, smiles would light that face of thine
And warm the stone.

LAST WORDS

HE left me for a foreign land :

I could not even free

One little tear to gem the hand

That God had given me ;

For "I will follow soon, my dear,"

I laughed with girlish air,—

"The sun that cheers our pathway here

Shall beam upon us there!"

And so we parted. . . . Listen, God!—

I may not even free

One little tear to dew the sod

Where, sleeping peacefully,

He waits in foreign lands—my dear!

But prophecy and prayer,—

"The sun that cheers our pathway here

Shall beam upon us—*there!*"

AT BAY

DESPERATE, at last I stand
Ready, Fate, with open hand
To grasp yours, or to strike
Blow for blow—just as you like.

You have dogged me day by day—
Chased me when a child at play:
Even from the mother nest
Pushed me when I needed rest.

You have crouched along my track
Like a hound, and hurled me back,
While your dog's-tongue lapped the blood
Of my murdered babyhood.

Pitilessly, year by year,
From the farthest past to here,
You have fallen like a blight
On each blossom of delight.

AT BAY

You have risen up between
Me and every hope serene
That has promised rest at last
From the trials of the past.

You have shut the light of day
From my present—stolen away
All my faith in better things
Than sheer desperation brings.

But as now I come to know
That I may no farther go,
I have turned—not to resist,
But to greet you hand or fist.

THE BALLAD OF SMILES AND TEARS

BY LEE O. HARRIS AND JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

I

WHEN the gleeful Spring on dancing feet
Pranks the sward of the forest aisles,
And the bluebird pipes from his old retreat,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:
But whenever the wind of winter piles
The drifting snow on the frozen meres,
And the feet are worn with the weary miles,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

II

When the soul is brimmed with a joy too sweet
To waste like that of a laughing child's,
When the lips of love for the first time meet,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:

THE BALLAD OF SMILES AND TEARS

But whenever the kiss of love defiles,
And friendship wanes with the waning years,
When faith has perished, and hope beguiles,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

III

When the brow is crowned and the song complete,
And the minstrel's guerdon reconciles
The victor soul to the heart's defeat,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:
But whenever the world in scorn compiles
Its ready pages of scoffs and jeers,
And the brain is weary of envy's wiles,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

L'ENVOY

When the eyelids droop like a drowsy child's,
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:
But whenever the waking is fraught with fears,
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

WAIT

WE know, O faltering heart,
Thy need is great :
But weary is the way that leads to art,
And all who journey there must bear their part—
Must bear their part, and—wait.

The way is wild and steep,
And desolate :
No flowers blossom there, nor lilies peep
Above the walls to warn you, as you weep,
With one white whisper—"Wait."

You will find thorns, alas !
And keen as fate :
And, reaching from rank fens of withered grass,
Briers will clutch your feet, nor let you pass—
And you must wait—must wait.

WAIT

And though with failing sight

 You see the gate

Of Promise locked and barred, with swarthy Night

Guarding the golden keys of morning light,—

 Press bravely on—and wait.

LELLOINE

I

TINY queen,
Lelloine!

Little eyes laugh out between
 Dimpled fingers that were busy
But a weary moment since
 Mischief-making—for she is a
Match for Puck, the fairy prince!
She must ever be advancing
Some new prank; and laughing, dancing,
 Disappearing at the door,
Like a sunbeam leaving shaded
 All that was so bright before—
Like a sunbeam leaving faded
 Flowers on the floor.
O, you joking, dear provoking,
Little laughing Lelloine!

LELLOINE

II

Calm, serene,

Lelloine !

Lying lily-like between
The blurred leaves of life and love
That our wet eyes bend above,
Lisp nor laughter on the lips :
Two white rose-leaves now eclipse
Such of glances as the chance
Dimple dances in advance.
Darling ! Darling ! tell us why
You do neither laugh nor cry ;
Even though you moaned in pain,
We could be so glad again !
What unchanging smile is this
That we shudder so to kiss ?
Hearts are leaning low to glean
'All your meaning, Lelloine.

SINCE MY MOTHER DIED

SINCE my mother died, the tone
Of my voice has fainter grown,
And my words, so strangely few,
Are as strange to me as you.
Something like a lens is drawn
Over all I look upon.
And the world is O so wide,
 Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, my face
Knows not any resting-place,
Save in visions, lightly pressed
In its old accustomed rest
On her shoulder. But I wake
With a never-ending ache
In my heart, and naught beside,
 Since my mother died.

SINCE MY MOTHER DIED

Since my mother died, the years
Have been dropping like my tears,
Till the bloom is washed away
From my cheeks, and slow decay
Seams the corners of my eyes,
Where my childish laughter lies
Drowned in tears that never dried
 Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, my feet
Falter in the crowded street,
With bewildered steps that seem
Tangled in some grassy dream,
And, in busy haunts of men,
Slowly down the past again
Do I wander weary-eyed,
 Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, O friends!
No one leads me now, or lends
Me a kindly word, or touch
Of the hands I need so much;
No one counsels me, or cares
For my trials, doubts, despairs
And the world is O so wide,
 Since my mother died.

HOPE

HOPE, bending o'er me one time, snowed the flakes
Of her white touches on my folded sight,
And whispered, half rebukingly, "What makes
My little girl so sorrowful to-night?"

O scarce did I unclasp my lids, or lift
Their tear-glued fringes, as with blind embrace
I caught within my arms the mother-gift,
And with wild kisses dappled all her face.

That was a baby dream of long ago :
My fate is fanged with frost, and tongued with flame :
My woman-soul, chased naked through the snow,
Stumbles and staggers on without an aim.

And yet, here in my agony, sometimes
A faint voice reaches down from some far height,
And whispers through a glamouring of rhymes,—
"What makes my little girl so sad to-night?"

THE GINOINE AR-TICKLE

TALKIN' o' poetry—There're few men yit
 'At's got the stuff b'iled down so's it'll pour
 Out sorghum-like, and keep a year and more
Jes' sweeter ever' time you tackle it!
Why, all the jinglin' truck 'at hes been writ
 Fer twenty year and better is so pore
 You cain't find no sap in it any more
'N you'd find juice in puff-balls!—*And I'd quit!*
What people wants is facts, I apperhend;
 And naked Natur is the thing to give
Your writin' bottom, eh? And I contend
 'At honest work is allus bound to live.
Now them's my views; 'cause you kin recommend
Sich poetry as that from end to end.

STANZAS FOR A NEW SONG

WHISTLE us something old, you know !

Pucker your lips with the old-time twist,
And whistle the jigs of the long ago,
Or the old hornpipes that you used to whist.
Some old, old tune that we oft averred
Was a little the oldest thing we'd heard
Since "the bob-tailed nag" was a frisky colt,
In the babbling days of old "Ben Bolt."

Whistle us something old and gray—

Some toothless tune of the bygone years—
Some bald old song that limps to-day
With a walking-stick this vale of tears.
Whistle a stave of the good old days,
Ere the fur stood up in a thousand ways
On the listener's pelt as he ripped and tore,
And diddle-dee-blank-blanked Pinafore.

STANZAS FOR A NEW SONG

CHORUS

Whistle us something old, you know !
Pucker your lips with the old-time twist,
And whistle the jigs of the long ago,
Or the old hornpipes that you used to whist.

LINES TO AN ONSETTLED YOUNG MAN

“O, WHAT is Life at last,” says you,
“’At woman folks and man folks too,
Cain’t, oncomplainin’, worry through?

“An’ what is Love, ’at no one yit
’At’s monkeyed with it kin forgit,
Er gits fat on remember’n’ hit?

“An’ what is Death?”—W’y, looky hyur—
Ef Life an’ Love don’t suit you, sir,
Hit’s jes’ the thing yer lookin’ fer!

PLANTATION HYMN

HEAR dat rum'lin' in de sky !

Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah !

O, dat's de good Lord walkin' by,

Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah !

CHORUS

Mahster ! Jesus !

You done come down to please us,

And dahs de good Lord sees us,

As he goes walkin' by !

See dat lightnin' lick his tongue ?

Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah !

'Spec he taste de song 'ut de angels sung—

Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah !

De big black clouds is bust in two,

Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah !

And dahs de 'postles peekin' frue,

Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah !

PLANTATION HYMN

Know dem angels ev'ry one,
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!
Kase dey's got wings and we'se got none,
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

CHORUS

Mahster! Jesus!
You done come down to please us,
And dahs de good Lord sees us,
As he goes walkin' by!

MICHAEL FLYNN AND THE BABY

LUK at 'ere, ould baby,—who
Shak's the fist av 'im at you?
Who's the spalpeen wid the stim
Av his poipe a-pokin' 'im?
Who's the divil grinnin' 'ere
In the eyes av yez, me dear?
Arrah! darlint, spake and soy
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

Wheer's the gab yer mither had
Whin she blarneyed yer ould dad
Wid her tricks and 'ily words
Loike the liltin' av the birds?
Wheer's the tongue av Michael Flynn,
'And the capers av the chin
He's a-waggin' at yez?—Hoy?
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

MICHAEL FLYNN AND THE BABY

Arrah ! baby, wid the eyes
Av the saints in Paradise,
And Saint Patrick's own bald pate,
Is it yer too howly swate
To be changin' words because
It's the hod, and not the cross,
Ornamints me showlder?—Soy?
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

GUINEVERE

WHAT is it I am waiting for?
My footfall in the corridor
Jars upward through the night, and swings
The brazen silence till it rings
Like any bell. My weak knees faint
Before the sad face of my saint,
And, 'twixt my lifted eyes and tears,
Dim lists of mounted cavaliers
Swim past. . . . A nodding plume that dips
To brush the dead prayers from my lips
Like dust—. God's mercy! rid my sight
Of Launcelot, or blind me quite!
I know what duty is! Ah, Christ!
The memory of our latest tryst
Is fanged within my very soul! . . .
I swear to you, in all control
I held myself! . . . 'Twas love, I wis,
That sprang upon that kiss of his,

GUINEVERE

And drank and drained it to the lees
Of three God-shaken destinies.
'Twas love, I tell you, wild, insane,
Stark mad and babbling, wanton, vain—
But tell me, Where is Arthur?—or,
What is it I am waiting for?

THE CONQUEROR

HE hears the whir of the battle-drum,
And the shrill-voiced fife, and the bugle-call,
With a thirsty spirit that drinks it all
As men might drink the wine poured from
Old wicker flagons raimented
With the rust and dust of ages dead.

He plunges into the crimson sea
Of carnage, and with a dauntless pride,
He swims, with his good star, side by side,
To the blood-sprayed heights of Victory,
Where never his glory waxes dim,
Though a woman's weak hand conquers him.

And high and alone—as the sculptor makes
Him set in stone that the world may see—
He sits there, crowned eternally,
And sheltered under a flag that shakes
Her silken stripes and her silver stars
Into a tangle of endless wars.

THE MAD LOVER

My eyes are feverish and dull ;
I'm tired, and my throat hurts so !
And life has grown so pitiful—
So very pitiful, I know
Not any hope of rest or peace,
But just to live on, ache by ache,
Feeling my heart click on, nor cease,
Nor ever wholly break.

You smiled so sweetly, Miriam Wayne,
I could not help but love your smile,
And fair as sunshine after rain
It glimmered on me all the while ;
Why, it did soak as summer light
Through all my life, until, indeed,
I ripened as an apple might
From golden rind to seed.

THE MAD LOVER

Fate never wrought so pitiless
 An evil, as when first your eyes
Poured back in mine the tenderness
 That made the world a Paradise—
For Miriam, remembering
 The warm white hands that lay in mine
Like wisps of sunshine vanishing—
 Your kisses, spilled like wine

Down over forehead, face, and lips,
 Till I lay drunken with delight
From crown of soul to finger-tips—
 . . . Shriek, Memory, in mad affright!—
Howl at the moon like any hound!
 Yelp “love” and “liar” every breath,
And “Heaven is lost and hell is found!”
 So moan yourself to death!

HER VALENTINE

SOMEBODY's sent a funny little valentine to me.
It's a bunch of baby roses in a vase of filigree,
And hovering above them—just as cute as he can be—
Is a fairy Cupid tangled in a scarf of poetry.

And the prankish little fellow looks so knowing in his
glee,
With his golden bow and arrow, aiming most unerringly
At a pair of hearts so labelled that I may read and see
That one is meant for "One Who Loves," and one is
meant for me.

But I know the lad who sent it! It's as plain as A-B-C!—
For the roses they are *blushing*, and the vase stands *awk-*
wardly,
And the little god above it—though as cute as he can
be—
Can not breathe the lightest whisper of his burning love
for me.

THE DEAD JOKE AND THE FUNNY MAN

LONG years ago, a funny man,
 Flushed with a strange delight,
Sat down and wrote a funny thing
 All in the solemn night;
And as he wrote he clapped his hands
 And laughed with all his might.
 For it was such a funny thing,
 O such a very funny thing,
 This wonderfully funny thing,
He
 Laughed
 Outright.

And so it was this funny man
 Printed this funny thing—
Forgot it, too, nor ever thought
 It worth remembering,
Till but a day or two ago.

THE DEAD JOKE AND THE FUNNY MAN

(Ah! what may changes bring!)

He found this selfsame funny thing

In an exchange—"O funny thing!"

He cried, "You dear old funny thing!"

And

Sobbed

Outright.

ONE ANGEL

“A HOMELY little woman with big hands”:

’Twas thus she named herself, and shook her head
All solemnly, the day that we were wed,
While I—well, I laughed lightly as I said,—
“No prince am I astray from fairy lands,
O ‘homely little woman with big hands’ !”

“My homely little woman with big hands”

I called her ever after,—first, intent
On irony and admonition blent;
Then out of—since she smiled—pure merriment;
And lastly, from sheer lack of reprimands.
Brave, homely little woman with big hands!

My homely little woman with big hands,
Somehow, grew almost beautiful to me
As time went by. Her features I could see
Grow ever fairer; and so tenderly

ONE ANGEL

The strong hands clung, their touches were commands,
Dear homely little woman with big hands!

.

A homely little woman, with big hands
Folded all patiently across her breast—
The plain face fair and beautiful in rest—
But O, the lips that answer not when pressed!
“Make me,” I cry to God, who understands,
“A homely little angel with big hands!”

AN INVOCATION

SWEET Sleep, with mellow palms trailed listlessly
Above mine eyelids, folding out the light
Of coming day, and shutting in the night
That gave but now such wondrous dreams to me—
Bide with me yet with thy dear sorcery,
Until once more I grow forgetful quite
Of all the cares that blur my waking sight
With dim, regretful tears! I beg of thee
To lift again thy wand with magic filled,
And filter through my faith the words: Behold,
Aladdin, as thou badest me, I build
A new dream o'er the ruins of the old—
Thine all eternal palace, silver-silled,
And walled with harps, and roofed with crowns of
gold!

FROM BELOW

In the dim summer night they were leaning alone
From the balcony over the walk;
He, careless enough, one had guessed by the tone
Of his voice and his murmurous talk;
And she—well, her laugh flowed as sweet to the breeze
As the voice of the faint violin
That ran, with a ripple of ivory keys,
Through the opera warbled within.

.
In the odorous locust boughs trailed o'er the eaves,
The nightingale paused in his tune,
And the mute katydid hid away in the leaves
That were turned from the smile of the moon:
And the man sat alone, with his fingers clenched tight
O'er a heart that had failed in its beat,
While the passers-by saw but a spatter of light
Where he dropped his cigar in the street.

GLAMOUR

WAS it in the misty twilight, or the midnight, or the
morning,

Or was it in the glare of noon, or dazzle of the day,
That, half asleep and half awake, and without word or
warning,

My fancy, slowly slipping earthly anchor, sailed away?

O leave me and my lazy dream a little while together,
Blending each within the other as we waken in the
dawn,

With languid lids anointed by the balmy summer weather
As it wells above the casement that our vision swoons
upon!

Linger with me yet a little, O my lazy dream! nor leave
me;

Though we hear the swallows twitter, it is only in
their sleep:

And I want you just to cling to me and love me and
deceive me

A little ere the morning when I waken but to weep.

GLAMOUR

Ah! dream of mine, I see you growing clearer yet and clearer;

Your fairy face comes back again from out the misty past,

And your smile shines on before you till, approaching ever nearer,

It gilds your grave into a glorious trysting-place at last.

And you lean there—waiting for me—here's the dainty rose-leaf letter

That you sent me, saying, "Meet me here, and share my deep delight,

For my love by this long silence is so truer, purer, better,
That you will taste of Heaven when you touch my lips to-night."

Was it in the misty twilight, or the midnight, or the morning,

Or was it in the glare of noon, or dazzle of the day,
That, half asleep and half awake, and without word or warning,

My fancy, slowly slipping earthly anchor, sailed away?

PUCK

O IT was Puck! I saw him yesternight
Swung up betwixt a phlox-top and the rim
Of a low crescent moon that cradled him,
Whirring his rakish wings with all his might,
And pursing his wee mouth, that dimpled white
And red, as though some dagger keen and slim
Had stung him there, while ever faint and dim
His eerie warblings piped his high delight:
Till I, grown jubilant, shrill answer made,
At which all suddenly he dropped from view;
And peering after, 'neath the everglade,
What was it, do you think, I saw him do?
I saw him peeling dewdrops with a blade
Of starshine sharpened on his bat-wing shoe.

MY LADDIE WI' THE BASHFU' GRACE

My laddie wi' the bashfu' grace,
That darena spak the tender loe
That glints o'er a' thy bonny face
Like winter sunset on the snow,—
Gin ye wad only tak my hand,
And ask, wi' pressure fond and true,
My heart—my heart wad understand,
And gie its loe to you.

But sin' ye winna spak me free,
Or darena tak the langin' tip
O' ain puir finger,—come to me
In mirk o' nicht and touch my lip—
Then a' the glowin' universe
Will bloom wi' stars, and flow'rs, and a',
And God's ain sel' abide wi' us,
Nor ever gang awa'.

A TRESS OF HAIR

THIS tress of hair my sweetheart sent to me,
And so I bent above it tenderly
 And kissed the dainty bow
That bound the wisp of sunshine, thrilled forsooth,
Because her lips had nestled there—in truth,
 She told me so.

And I remember, reading that, the flush
That fevered all my face, and the heart's hush
 And hurry in my ears;
And how the letter trembled and grew blurred
Until my eyes could read no other word—
 For happy tears.

This tress of hair! Why, I did hug and hold
It here against my heart, and call it gold
 With Heaven's own luster lit;
And I did stroke and smooth its gleaming strands,
And pet and fondle it with foolish hands,
 And talk to it!

A TRESS OF HAIR

And now I pray God's blessing may alight
Upon the orange flowers she wears to-night.

Her features—keep them fair,
Dear Lord, but let her lips not quite forget
The love they kindled once is gilding yet
This tress of hair.

OH, HER BEAUTY

Oh, her beauty was such that it dazzled my eyes
Like a dreamer's, who, gazing in day-dying skies,
Sees the snow of the clouds and the gold of the sun
And the blue of the heavens all blended in one
Indescribable luster of glorious light,
Swooning into the moon of a midsummer night.

Oh, her beauty was such that I fancied her hair
Was a cloud of the tempest, tied up with a glare
Of pale purple lightning, that darted and ran
Through the coils like the blood in the veins of a man:
And from dark silken billows that girdled her free,
Her shoulder welled up like the moon from the sea.

Oh, her beauty was such, as I knelt, with the tips
Of the fingers uplifted she snatched from my lips,
And saw the white flood of her wrath as it dashed
O'er the features, that one moment later had flashed
From my vision forever, I raised not a knee
Till I had thanked God for so rescuing me.

MY OLD FRIEND

YOU'VE a manner all so mellow,
 My old friend,
That it cheers and warms a fellow,
 My old friend,
Just to meet and greet you, and
Feel the pressure of a hand
That one may understand,
 My old friend.

Though dimmed in youthful splendor,
 My old friend,
Your smiles are still as tender
 My old friend,
And your eyes as true a blue
As your childhood ever knew,
And your laugh as merry, too,
 My old friend.

MY OLD FRIEND

For though your hair is faded,
 My old friend,
And your step a trifle jaded,
 My old friend,
Old Time, with all his lures
In the trophies he secures,
Leaves young that heart of yours,
 My old friend.

And so it is you cheer me,
 My old friend,
For to know you and be near you,
 My old friend,
Makes my hopes of clearer light,
And my faith of surer sight,
And my soul a purer white,
 My old friend.

THE OLD HAND-ORGAN

HARSH-VOICED it was, and shrill and high,
 With hesitating stops and stutters,
As though the vagrant melody,
 Playing so long about the gutters,
 Had been infected with some low
 Malignant type of vertigo.

A stark-eyed man that stared the sun
 Square in the face, and without winking;
His soldier cap pushed back, and one
 Scarred hand that grasped the crank, unshrinking—
 But from the jingling discord made
 By shamefaced pennies as he played.

THE PIPER'S SON

IN olden days there dwelt a piper's son,
Hight Thomas, who, belike from indigence,
Or utter lack of virtuous preference
Of honorable means of thrift, did, one
Weak hour of temptation—(weaker none!)—
Put by ye promptings of his better sense,
And rashly gat him o'er a neighbor's fence
Wherein ye corner was a paling run
About a goodly pig; and thence he lured,
All surreptitiously, ye hapless beast,
And had it slaughtered, salted down, and cured—
Yea, even tricked and garnished for ye feast,
Ere yet ye red-eyed Law had him immured,
And round and soundly justice-of-ye-peaced.

THERE IS A NEED

THERE is a need for every ache or pain
That falls unto our lot. No heart may bleed
That resignation may not heal again
And teach us—there's a need.

There is a need for every tear that drips
Adown the face of sorrow. None may heed,
But weeping washes whiter on the lips
Our prayers—and there's a need.

There is a need for weariness and dearth
Of all that brings delight. At topmost speed
Of pleasure sobs may break amid our mirth
Unheard—and there's a need.

There is a need for all the growing load
Of agony we bear as years succeed;
For lo, the Master's footprints in the road
Before us—There's a need.

LOVE'S AS BROAD AS LONG

LOOKY here!—you fellers—you
Poets I'm a-talkin' to,—
Allus rhymin', right er wrong,
'Bout your "little" love, and "long"—
'Pears to me 'at nary one
Of you fellers gits much fun
Out o' lovin'—tryin' to fit
Out some fool-receet fer it!—
Love's as broad as long!

Now, I 'low 'at love's a thing
You cain't jes' set down and sing
Out your order fer, and say
You'll hev yourn a certain way;
And how "long" a slice you'll take,
Er how short—'cause love don't make
No distinctions, and you'll find,
When it comes, it's all one kind—
Jes' as broad as long!

Fust, one of you'll p'tend
"Love's no idle song," and send
Up his voice in jes' the song
He's th'owed up on—"Love me long!"

LOVE'S AS BROAD AS LONG

Now they hain't no womarn needs
No sich talk as that!—er heeds
Sich advice as would infer
You hed any doubts o' her!
Love's as broad as long.

Ner I don't see any use,
Er occasion, er excuse
Fer some other chap to say,
In his passioneter way,
“Love me madly, as of yore!”—
'Cause I've seed sich love afore,
'At got fellers down, and jes'
Wooled 'em round till they confessed
Love was broad as long.

No; I'll tell you: You jes' let
Love alone, and you kin bet,
When the time comes, Love'll be
Right on hands as punctchully
As he was the day Eve sot
Waitin', in the gyarden-spot,
Fer ole Adam jes' to go
On ahead and tell her so!
Love's as broad as long!

UNKNOWN FRIENDS

O FRIENDS of mine, whose kindly words come to me
Voiced only in lost lisps of ink and pen,
If I had power to tell the good you do me,
And how the blood you warm goes laughing through me,
My tongue would babble baby-talk again.

And I would toddle round the world to meet you—
Fall at your feet, and clamber to your knees
And with glad, happy hands would reach and greet you,
And twine my arms about you, and entreat you
For leave to weave a thousand rhymes like these—

A thousand rhymes enwrought of naught but presses
Of cherry lip and apple cheek and chin,
And pats of honeyed palms, and rare caresses,
And all the sweets of which as Fancy guesses
She folds away her wings and swoons therein.

AN END

Go AWAY from me—do! I am tired of you!—
That I loved you last May isn't this season, too;
And, you know, every spring there's a new bird to sing
In the nest of the old, and a ghost on the wing!

Now, don't you assert that I'm simply a flirt—
And it's babyish for you to say that I hurt,
And my words are a dart, when they're only a part
Of your own fickle nature committed to heart.

It was all a mistake, and I don't want to make
The silly thing over for your silly sake—
Though I really once may have been such a dunce
As to fancy you loved me, some far-away months.

So, go away—do! I am tired clean through,
And you can't make me even feel sorry for you—
For, with us, every spring there's a new bird to sing
In the nest of the old, and a ghost on the wing.

HER CHOICE

“MY love or hate—choose which you will,”
He says; and o’er the window-sill
The rose-bush, jostled by the wind,
Rasps at his hands, close-clenched behind,
As she makes answer, smiling clear
As is the day,—“Your hate, my dear!”

An interval of silence—so
Intensely still, the cattle’s low
Across the field’s remotest rim
Comes like a near moan up to him,
While o’er the open sill once more
The rose-bush rasps him as before.

Then, with an impulse strange and new
To him, he says: “’Tis wise of you
To choose thus—for by such a choice
You lose so little, that,”—his voice
Breaks suddenly—the rose-bush stirs—
But ah! his hands are—safe in hers.

A CASE IN PINT

WE don't go much on lawin'
Here in around the mines?—
Well, now, you're jest hurrahin'
Like the wind amongst the pines!
Of course we allus aim to
Give "the prisoner" a chance—
Though sometimes a jury's game to
Ring a verdict in advance!

What wuz his name—this feller
'At stold the Jedge's mare
Last spring?—wuz tryin' to sell her
Down here at Rip and Tear,
When "Faro Bill" dropped on him,
And bagged him, sound and good
And biznesslike, dog-gone him,
As the constable a-could!

A CASE IN PINT

Well, anyway, his trial

Wuz a case in pint:—He pled
“Not guilty”—a denial

’At his attorney said
Could be substantiated

On the grounds, ’at when the mare
Wuz “stold,” as claimed and stated,
The defendant wuzn’t square,—

But he’d be’n a-testifyin’,

Round the raw edge of a spree
At Stutsman’s bar, a-tryin’

To hold one drink in three,
To “Jim-jams”; and he reckoned

’At his client’s moral tone
Could not be classed as second
To the Jedge’s—er his own.

“That savin’-clause is timely,”

Says the Jedge, a-turnin’ back
To color as sublimely

As I’ve seed him turn a jack.—

“But,” says he to the defendant,

“Ef you didn’t ‘steal’ the mare
I’ll ask ef your attendant

‘Pharos William,’ didn’t swear

A CASE IN PINT

“You *wuzn’t* ‘full’ when captured?”

Then, a-drawin’ of his gun,
The Jedge went on, enraptured
With the trail ’at he’d begun,—
“I’ll tax your re-collection
To enquire ef you know
That hoss left my protection
On’y jes’ five hours ago?—

“In consequence, it follers,
No man as drunk as you—
And I’ll bet a hundred dollars
To the opposition’s two!—
Could sober to the beauty
Of the standerd you present
This writin’—hence my duty
Plainly is—to circumvent—”

And afore the jury knowed it,
Bang! his gun went!—“And I’ll ask,”
He went on, as he th’owed it
Up to finish out his task,
“Ef it’s mortal?”—then, betrayin’
Some emotion, with a bow,
He closed by simply sayin’—
“You can take the witness now!”

OLE BULL

DEAD ; IN BERGEN, NORWAY ; AUGUST 18, 1880

THE minstrel's mystic wand
Has fallen from his hand ;
 Stilled is the tuneful shell ;
The airs he used to play
For us but yesterday
Have failed and died away
 In sad farewell.

Forgive—O noble heart,
Whose pure and gracious art
 Enraptured, all these years,
Sang sweet, and sweeter yet
Above all sounds that fret,
And all sobs of regret—
 Forgive our tears !

OLE BULL

Forgive us, weeping thus
That thou art gone from us—
Because thy song divine,
Too, with the master, gone,
Leaves us to listen on
In silence till the dawn
That now is thine.

REQUIESCAT

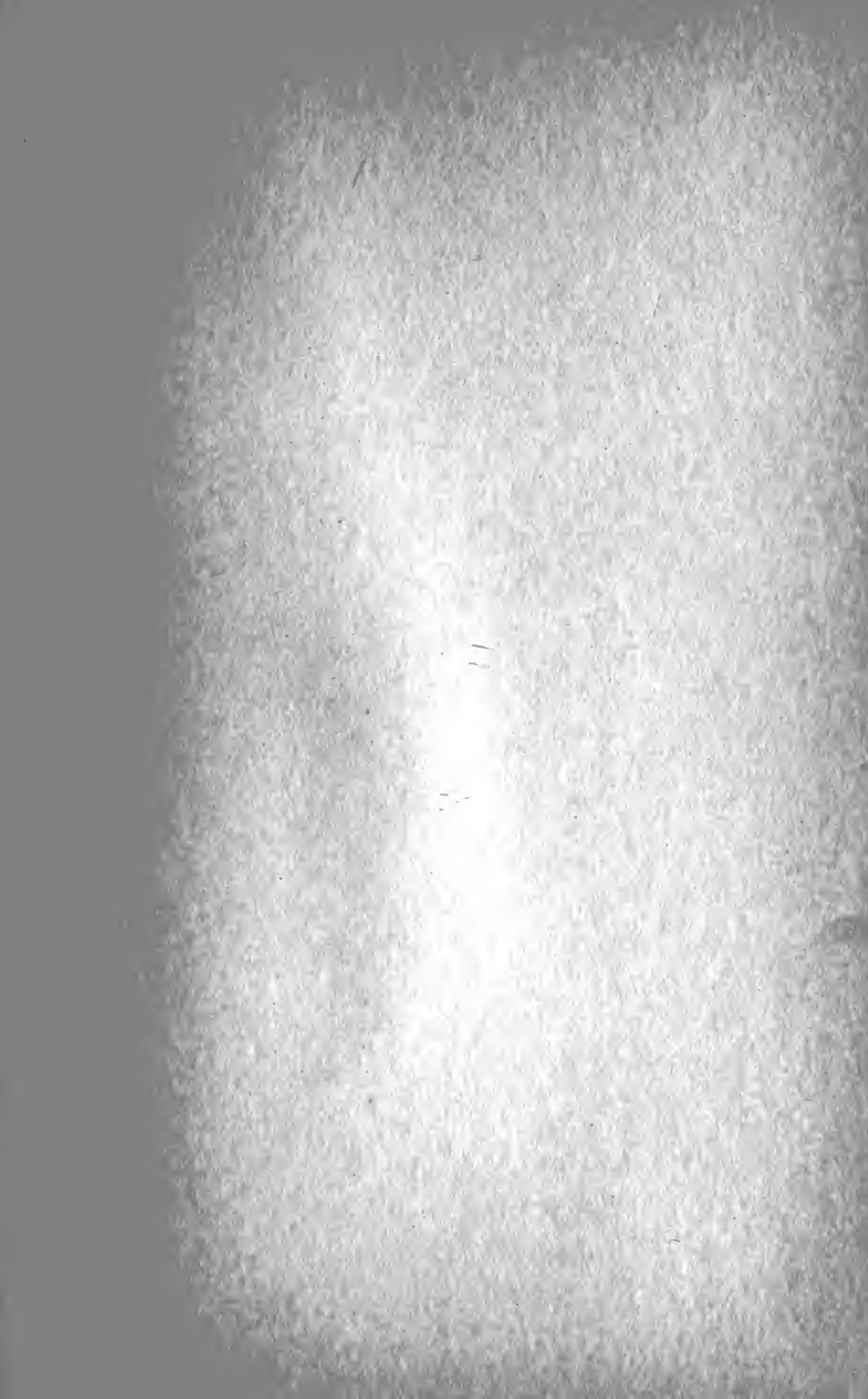
BE it life, be it death, there is nearing
The dawn of a glorious day,
When the murmurs of doubt we are hearing
In silence shall dwindle away;
And the hush and content that we covet—
The rest that we need, and the sleep
That abides with the eyelids that love it,
Shall come as we weep.

We shall listen no more to the sobbing
Of sorrowing lips, and the sound
In our pillows at night of the throbbing
Of feverish hearts will have found
The quiet beyond understanding
The rush and the moan of the rain,
That shall beat on the shingles, demanding
Admittance in vain.

REQUIESCAT

The hand on the dial shall number
The hours unmarked; and the bell
Shall waken us not from the slumber
That knows neither tolling of knell
Nor the peals of glad melody showered
Like roses of song o'er the pave
Where the bride and the groom walk their flowered
Green way to the grave.

In that dawn, when it breaks, we shall wonder
No more why the heavens send back
To our prayers but the answer of thunder,
And the lightning-scrawl, writ on the black
Of the storm in a language no mortal
May read till his questioning sight
Shall have pierced through the innermost portal
Of death to the light.









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